

PROBATION

AND

OTHER TALES;

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "SELWYN IN SEARCH OF A DAUGHTER,"

"TALES OF THE MOORS," &c.

'To bear is to conquer our fate'
(CAMPBELL.

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INTRODUCTION.

IF it be asked why, amid a redundance of fictions of the most splendid and spirit-stirring description, the following simple pages were written, criticism may be disarmed by the reply of affection, that they were written, because every effort of memory, however superfluous, and every touch of the pencil, however feeble, which recalled to the eye of fancy their delightful subject, was a source of positive gratification. Their publication has been dictated by a kindred motive, viz.: the hope that one whose element and vocation it was, during three quarters of a century, to do good—~~and~~ by merchance

be made, even now when unhappily no more, to contribute indirectly to the same benevolent purpose.

If one flower, however dim and scentless, shall have been added to the chaplet of departed worth, or one alleviation, however trifling, purchased for the ills of surviving penury, the author's unpretending object will have been attained.



PROBATION.

CHAPTER I.

Hence ! Earthborn thoughts of worldly gain,
My faith is plight !
Mere worldly love might wealth obtain,
Not true delight !

T. SHERIDAN.

It has of late become the fashion with Englishmen—I am one by the courtesy which designates as such, all born within our extensive empire—to admire and eulogize Scotland ; and many in truth are the pilgrims from the south who have been indebted to the “land of the mountain and the flood,” for renovated health, and gratified curiosity, and hospitality, warm and unsophisticated as the hearts of those by whom it was extended.

But my obligations to its wild glens, and brown heaths, and friendly hearts, are of a deeper and more enduring nature. I owe to them a possession which, by the owner at least, is not likely to be inadequately appreciated—viz., a new and amended edition of myself!—the development of faculties, which objects so novel and striking could alone perhaps have rescued from the slumbers of inanity,—and of a character which, imperfect as it has remained, has been raised to the capacity of enjoying and communicating intellectual pleasures and rational happiness.

Gratitude for such substantial benefits, the importunity of their amiable sharer, a thousand delightful reminiscences, have frequently urged me to become my own historian; and in an age when having *lived* at all, seems nearly a sufficient title to the honours of autobiography—one who might be styled, like the hero of a late clever fiction, a “man of Two Lives” possessed, vanity whispered, a sort of double claim on human sympathies.

Not that, like the gifted hero aforesaid, I ever smarted or atoned in *propria persona*, in a second lease of existence, for the errors of a first—but that without any startling change either of fea-

tures, person, or identity, without crossing any bourne but that imaginary one which severs two integral parts of the British empire, and chiefly by the (I believe) perfectly natural agency of two females, the younger of whom was only a Lancashire, while the elder was certainly a white witch—I have managed to lead two successive lives upon earth, quite as distinct in character, purpose, and incidents as those of the “Don Doblado” above alluded to.

My former self had been so long lost in my present improved edition, that it was not immediately the reluctant shade could be compelled from merited oblivion; but by degrees, the “unreal mockery” of my early years rose upon my wondering memory, and as I traced my own transition from an existence that had nothing of life but the name—to one which, however blended with imperfection, has yet in its bearings and aspirations a connexion, though remote, with a loftier sphere—I have fancied, perhaps idly—that its recital might stimulate some restless and therefore unquiet spirit, wandering through the “dry places” of this world—“seeking rest and finding none,” to exchange them for a purer, and more invigorating atmo-

sphere; to begin to live, though late, as I did—and find in mental cultivation, domestic affections, and lofty moral and religious principles—the germ and rudiments of a new and better existence, no more resembling his previous vegetation, than the soaring wing and aerial enjoyments of the butterfly claim kindred with the sordid prison and bounded faculties of the reptile !

But though I have thus been induced, on grounds more than usually vain and visionary, to inflict on that fraction of the public into whose hands this may chance to fall—a history of my life—I might have learned from the endless file of reminiscents, (especially the accomplished Madame de Genlis, whose infancy occupies nearly two tomes of her elaborate dissertation in eight volumes on the *first person singular*)—to spare it the additional bore of my own childhood. Had that baby period teemed with none but the usual nursery anecdotes of precocious wit and wisdom, and been passed in my paternal mansion, or even my native country—I should certainly never have been tempted to record the mysteries of the pap-boat, or the prodigies of the Primer. But he, who within the first seven years of his life, has

visited, alas ! as the sport of fortune ! three of the four quarters of the globe, and whose infant recollections present consequently a strange medley of incongruous images, never to be effaced by the subsequent events of ordinary life—may be permitted, perhaps, to devote as many pages as he has above reckoned years, to the causes of his early migrations, and their ineffaceable recollections.

I feel thankful that when I describe my grandfather, I must do so from report ; for it had been alike painful to me to owe kindness to the cruel hand which signed my father's fatal exile—or to traduce a benefactor, though a late and stern one. But he lived not to make even tardy reparation ; and though gratitude to a kindlier being may soften the picture, I feel that in painting the power of wealth and accumulation to sear the heart, and stifle the voice of nature—I am only rendering reluctant justice to the memory of my unfortunate parents.

Mr. Meredith was one of those votaries of gain, whom the patient and laborious acquisition of wealth exalts in this commercial country, from absolute insignificance, to the acme of influence and consideration. Not only was his own word or

signature—to use a vulgar but expressive phrase—as good as the Bank of England—but a nod of intimacy, a familiar shake of the hand from him on Change might have served the purpose of a speculator, almost as well as an actual advance of capital. Dozens of younger faces waited his appearance to dress themselves in auspicious smiles, or portentous gloom; auguries were formed from the number and quickness of the taps on his snuff-box—and the fate of empires prognosticated from the position of his bob wig, whose deviation from the horizontal seldom failed to indicate that, according to Shakspeare—“the times were out of joint!”

At that mature age when what visits generous tempers in the shape of prudence, assumes in the miser the garb of determined and cautious selfishness, the loss of a frugal housekeeper, the difficulty of replacing her, and dread of petty imposition, moved my grandfather to look about for a wife. She must not be young, as that inferred thoughtlessness; nor handsome, as that implied expense. She must not be portionless, to justify his claim to prudence; nor well enough endowed, to entitle her to a voice in the household. It was

desirable to the pride of wealth that she should be well-born ; but indispensable to the habit of despotism, that she should be dependent.

These were difficult qualities to combine in one individual ; but the good luck which had attended Mr. Meredith through life, united them in the person of a gentle interesting young woman, whose father, an idle scion of a respectable family, had been provided for by a place under government. The income of this he habitually exceeded, and had for long averted the consequences of his improvidence by infringing on the small fortune which his daughter inherited from her mother. The knowledge of this base expedient had induced him to frustrate various eligible proposals of marriage for his poor girl, whom repeated disappointments, and the discomfort of her home, robbed prematurely of youthful bloom and vivacity.

An unexpected inquiry into the state of his accounts, involved Mr. Stanley in great embarrassment, and threatened him with exposure. Something of the matter reached my grandfather, who, carefully consulting the tables of human life, and calculating the chances, proposed to Mr. Stanley, (with whom he had been long acquainted) to ad-

vance the sum necessary to avert his disgrace, on condition of obtaining, with his daughter's hand, a right to her squandered portion, which was to be gradually repaid, as well as his actual advances, out of the ample salary of Mr. Stanley's office.

The barter was concluded, and its broken-spirited victim handed over to her purchaser as coolly as the unconscious parchment ratifying the bargain. Jane had too little to lose by the change to resist when it would have availed her nothing. She guessed, if she did not wholly penetrate the compact; and when she saw her selfish father once more hold up his head in boyish gaiety, tried to forget that her new companion was his senior.

This poor consolation was not long afforded her. In defiance of the best calculations, Mr. Stanley died; and my grandfather, who always looked on the event as a fraudulent escape from his creditors, set himself to save off his daughter's scanty comforts the portion he had failed to realize. Jane cared little for this. She had always known privation, and habit had inured her to submission; and beside the cradle of an infant boy, she soon ceased to regret her father or to dislike her husband.

It was no wonder, however, if under such circum-

stances, her whole soul centered in her child, or that she loved him all the better for resembling in no one point of feature or character his low-born and low-minded father. With the personal advantages of poor Mr. Stanley, he united unfortunately too much of his aristocratic improvidence of disposition ; and all who saw the boy, high-spirited, bold and independent as he grew up, under even a tyrannical parent, doubted that father's power to tame the youthful spirit to his own plebeian level ! “ Mr. Meredith may save himself the trouble ! ” was the general remark ; “ that boy will no more plod at a desk than a racer will grind in a mill ! He is a gentleman and a soldier every inch of him, and it is a pity he should ever be any thing else ! ”

So thought his mother's family, who had no objection to claim kindred with the Meredith thousands in the shape of a handsome young officer ; and her uncle, the general, offered him a commission before he was well out of the nursery. His father rejected the offer as an insult to his understanding, and the hope of her boy's society reconciled his mother to a less perilous vocation.

It was no easy task, however, to bend the spirit of Edmund to the drudgery of the ledger. The

mammon to which his father bowed was in his young eyes as dross ; and he would freely have bartered his chance of it for a pair of colours. But his mother's soft persuasions, and a heart naturally upright and dutiful, forbade him to deprive her of her sole comfort by selfish opposition ; and as long as there was only his own happiness at stake, he made the hard sacrifice.

But in exulting over the scarcely expected compliance of his son on one point, Mr. Meredith had miscalculated his powers of resistance on another and a tenderer one. Edmund indemnified himself for restraint and misery at home by more congenial society abroad ; and fell in love, with all the energy of a disposition whose thwarted and crushed feelings were but the more ready to concentrate themselves on the first being of a superior order that crossed his path.

I have hitherto spoken, I find, of my scarce remembered father, in the cold tone of an ordinary narrator ; but my mother ! I cannot speak thus of *her* ! I cannot repeat,—as I have heard a thousand times even from the unimpassioned lips of a stepmother—that she was beauty and grace personified, and that her virtues made even disobedience

excusable, without substituting my own childish recollections for vague generalities, and seeing her even now, with her soft blue eyes, beaming love on her child, and her fairy form bent in anxious solicitude over my tiny cot. Yes ! I shall never forget—the night before Ocean claimed her as his silent prey—the more than usual earnestness of the prayer I lisped after her—the never to be forgotten fervour of the kiss she came back to give her boy, or the heavenly smile with which she let fall a curtain, never more to be lifted between us in this evil world !

It would be painful and unedifying to dwell on domestic dissensions ; on obstinacy, unsoftened by filial concessions, and resistance exasperated by parental harshness. Edmund thought he had purchased, by assent to his father's wishes in regard to his profession, a right to corresponding compliance, while his parent saw in that step but the first of a series of sacrifices. Had he been able to allege one valid objection to the birth, manners, principles, or connexions of his beloved, Edmund, though unconvinced, might have listened ; but except that he did not choose his son to marry at all, (which he was ashamed to urge) and that Emily's

late father had once anticipated him in a commercial speculation, which so far from enriching had eventually injured him ; he had not even the shadow of a plea for his opposition. It assumed, from that very circumstance, a character of the most dogged inveteracy ; and he told his son, in a tone which he knew to be nearly as decisive as a legal instrument to the same effect, that he was disinherited if he married Miss Aspinall.

Had Edmund loved even less ardently and devotedly, his honour was engaged ; and he read in Emily's thin cheek and varying colour during the struggle, that she might resign him at the call of duty, but it would be at the cost of life. Having in vain offered delay—even of years—every compromise that lingering filial piety could dictate, he saw the health of his beloved sinking, his own youth wasting, and his temper deteriorating under a degrading conflict,—“ If I *am* disinherited, I will at least be free, and escape from this country altogether !” was his exclamation ; as he went from a last interview with his father, in which the former point seemed irrevocably decided—to request from the kindness of a relation of his bride's—a military appointment to India.

It was readily granted, and his marriage with an orphan kinswoman graced by the same friendly sanction—ere his stunned, but not softened father, could calculate on the rapidity of movements accelerated by despair. To his now alienated son his feelings had become matter of indifference ; but his poor mother's !—throughout the long painful business they had been his chief source of misery ! She had long had no will but her husband's—she could have no wish but her son's ; her mingled emotions, as she saw him a bridegroom, a soldier, and an exile, may be better imagined than expressed ! Her last hope on earth went with him ; and though she felt it was better that ocean should divide them, she never recovered the blow. It would be well if, on that Rubicon of resistance to parental authority which, once crossed, is crossed for ever—youth would remember how many a mother's heart has been withered by being left to cling desolately round some gnarled and blasted tree, when the green branches, which should have shadowed her old age, had been self-severed and scattered to the winds !

In the days when my father embarked in the prime of manhood for the east, its service was a certain passport to competence at least, if not

wealth ; and the excitement of his new profession, and the smiles of his adoring wife, banished thoughts of all save his mother, and to her he could write in all the sunny exultation of a cloudless climate.

But that climate's influence on a frame, delicately nurtured, and unused to exposure, he had never calculated ; and at the end of four or five years' service, the gay and gallant soldier drooped under a burning sun, and harrassing field duties, so alarmingly, that removal to a colder country became indispensable. My poor mother !—it was then doubtless that your round cheek grew once more so thin and pale, and that there settled on your brow that anxious expression which haunts me still—whenever I conjure up the features it made so touching ! Yes ! I have your own affecting letter to confirm the conjecture—that with the deep anxiety common to all who love as Edmund was beloved—mingled sad self-reproach, and self-upbraiding for the rash acceptance of a suit which had cost him parents, fortune, country—nay, perhaps, health and life !

There was now for Emily but the forlorn hope—and a forlorn one it was—of overcoming by his son's declining health, and the smiles of an infant

grandson, (for I had been born early on their arrival in India,) the causeless antipathy of Mr. Meredith. This chance, faint as it was, had been sadly weakened by the death of his wife, shortly after her son's departure ; and the substitution in her place of an elderly lady of fortune, whose affairs my grandfather had long conducted, and whose implicit confidence in him as their steward, led to this connexion of mutual convenience. Of her character my parents knew little ; nor was that little calculated to awake any lively hopes of her active co-operation in their favour. Edmund's reluctance to return gathered strength from the blank in his bereaved home—and it was with difficulty that his alarmed wife prevailed on him to go to Calcutta, to make the requisite arrangements for a voyage of necessity to Europe.

At the house of the agent by whom these were to be expedited, chance threw them into contact with an American captain, who, on casually hearing my mother's somewhat uncommon maiden name, coupled with the romantic circumstances of her marriage, exclaimed, “ I wish the young couple could claim kindred with old Doctor Aspinall, our American oddity, who, with a fortune of at least

200,000 dollars, has not, as far as I know, a soul to leave it to ! He has vowed vengeance against his English connexions, if he has any,—and he lets no Yankee enter his doors ; so, unless he makes his black servants his heirs, I suppose it must go to the states. It will really be a pity if this pretty Mrs. Meredith does not turn out a cousin at least !”

Part of this soliloquy my mother overheard ; the rest of it was repeated to her by the friendly agent ; and with the sanguine spirit of youth, she clung to the reed it afforded. North America would answer the purpose of invigorating the frame of her husband, as well as England ; there were no step-mothers there ; and the kind captain offered them a passage for half the cost of one in an English ship. She racked her brain to trace a connexion between herself and the Doctor, and was sure she had heard an old friend in England talk to her of the recluse, as no very distant relation ; though domiciliated in America even before its revolution, after taking an active part in which, in favour of England, he had (in disgust with her non-requital of his services) abjured his own country, without adopting in its stead the one in which habit, and

love of a wandering forest life, induced him still to reside.

All this the captain confirmed ; and the prospect seemed so flattering—provided access could once be had to the cynic's hermitage—it was no wonder if an affectionate wife, who saw in it possible wealth—and through her means—to the husband who had sacrificed all for her sake—entered on it with enthusiasm. My father embarked with more subdued feelings. His spirits had sunk with his health. Hope had lost much of its spring—but the idea supported Emily, and might benefit his boy—and he acquiesced.

CHAPTER II.

The broken flow'r of England might not stay
Amid those alien shades.

MRS. HEMANS.

It is astonishing how distinct a remembrance I retain of our arrival in America ; but it is because the transition to it from the land of my birth and childhood was so complete and startling. In India, I had grown up beneath a burning sky, surrounded by tropical images and productions ; tended by a strange-looking, but familiar black nurse, and my childish wishes anticipated by a crowd of indolent but obsequious coolies and palanquin boys. Like them, I ran about almost unencumbered by clothing, and waited impatiently for the cool hours of evening, to play in the dark and shady verandah, ere I sank to sleep beneath hardly any other cover-

ing than the mosquito curtains of my little cot. My mother I only knew as dressed in delicate muslin wrappers, and my father I seldom saw but in the slight nankeen or cotton jacket, appropriated to home and comfort. I had never heard any sound ruder than the respectful *Salam* from domestics, or the monotonous chaunt of the native bearers. I thought all in the world, except papa and mamma and a few more, were black, and wore turbans, and that it was specially designed for my caprice and convenience.

The first revolution in my ideas took place in the ship, where I saw that every body was white except one old negro cook, and evidently perceived, with childish mortification, that my accommodation formed a very small part of their business. There was no diminution of tenderness, for my mother was now my nurse, but I missed the long stories of the old Ayah, and my mother looked so grave and sorrowful when I was naughty, that one of the favourite pastimes of Indian children was wofully abridged. Then the noise and swearing of the sailors, and the groans and creakings of the vessel, and the rattling of the pump chains, and the dash of the waves against my little crib, all were so different

from the quiet lonely bungalow, with its chirping grasshoppers, and the light murmur of its overhanging palms. The only thing I could claim kindred with on board, was a goat ; and I tried to fancy it the same which had been reared from a kid, and fed tame in my father's compound. But our goat was white, and sleek, and silky, and the marine variety was dingy and coarse, and matted with tar ; our's was gentle and sportive—this the sailors had taught to be mischievous and troublesome.

By degrees the weather grew colder ; and one morning when my careful mother had covered me during my sleep with a blanket, I awoke fancying I had the goat for a bedfellow. My father began to pace the deck in a long warm great-coat, and my mother to replace her delicate India shawl with a furred pelisse ; but in spite of the efforts of both to prepare me for cold and winter, I shall never forget the surprise I felt, when on landing at New York, I saw leafless trees, and hills all covered with snow.

The dingy brick houses, and crowded streets seemed to me inexpressibly ugly ; and when we got to the hotel or tavern where we were to take up

our abode, I thought the people so rude, because they never made the "salam" to us, and put us into a dark nasty little room, that looked out upon nothing but dead walls. When we went to dinner, I was frightened at the number of strangers, who all stared, and some of them laughed at me, and there was no curry and rice at table, and I saw mamma could not eat much, any more than myself. We got a house of our own in a day or two; but it was smaller, and far worse than the hotel, and the old woman who came to cook for us, and be our only servant, was very cross to me, and rude to my mother, and I remember once told her, when mildly reprov'd for it, "~~not~~ to suppose she was talking to a beggarly nigger." Oh how often I wished the old Ayah, and the maty-boys, and the masolgies, and the palanquin bearers, back again.

The first agreeable sensation I remember experiencing in America, was when we embarked on the noble Hudson, to proceed towards Albany, near which Dr. Aspinall resided. The broad expanse of the river, and the deep forests then still visible, at little distance from its banks, brought back the Ganges to my infant memory; though the dirty crowded packet boat, (for it was long before the days

of steam palaces) and the harsh vociferations of the Yankee sailors, were a sad contrast to my father's tranquil budgerow, and the measured song of its Indian boatmen.

Beyond this instance of mingled association and contrast, I recollect very vaguely any other feature of our sojourn in America, except a memorable interview, with which I alone, (for my parents did not accompany me) was indulged by the eccentric relative we had crossed the globe in quest of.

I remember the care with which my poor mother adjusted to advantage my first warm suit of *real* boy's clothes, all shining with silver buttons, smoothed my rebellious curling locks, and with a kiss of reluctant fondness, consigned me to the arms of a tall old negro, sent to drive me in a light waggon, some miles into the forest to his master's hermitage.

Of the interview itself, I recollect little, except the grizzled beard and uncouth habit of the old man, and the strange collection of forest rarities with which he was surrounded. His room was a perfect museum, and I dreamt long after of the shining snakes, stuffed racoons, and murderous-looking Indian weapons, among which the old gen-

tleman lived, (like a wizard) with his two black familiars, the negro servant already mentioned, and his much more hideous wife. Though frightened and bewildered, my impressions on the whole were those of kindness ; and as I returned to my parents with a lapful of curiosities, and a letter to my mother with a heavy bag, out of which rolled heaps of shining dollars, I was rather surprised that on receiving it, she cried a long time, and would hardly look at or admire my treasures.

As soon as the ground was once more green, and I could make no more snowballs, we again embarked ; and as we got farther on, I often heard my mother say with a sigh, “ dear England ! ”—and my father began to tell me I was going home, and that it was to see grandpapa. He seemed to long much for land, and so did I ; for I was very tired of being shut up so long, and there was not even a goat to play with in this nasty little ship. My mother kissed and cried over me oftener than she had ever done, and could scarce bear me out of her sight. I have already adverted to the indelible impression made by one look, one kiss of inexpressible parting fondness—no doubt because it was the last ! Of the sudden catastrophe which

made it so, I recollect nothing—it was the shock of a moment.

We were sailing, (I have often heard the honest tar who saved my life relate), in careless security on a moonless but not starless night in March ; too near the Equinox, he used to add, to have kept so bad a look out. What wind there was, had so long blown off shore, that the master thought he could not lug the land too closely. All at once a squall of indescribable fury and suddenness sprung up from an opposite quarter, and before hands enough could be called up to make all tight—the unmanageable vessel, with her rudder disabled and sails in ribbons, was driving hopelessly upon the perpendicular rocks of U——.

The helmsman's efforts to keep her off, were, to the vengeful will of the whirlwind, like the impotent struggles of childhood. "She's gone !" was the cry that burst at once from lips that had never before uttered word of despondence. "She'll never strike twice yonder !"—muttered the old weather-beaten skipper—"stand to the boats, in God's name !" The uproar of the mingling elements—for a water-spout from above rattled fiercely to meet the foaming waves on our devoted deck—

woke my mother ; and her first impulse must have been, to save one at least, (the most helpless), of the objects of her affection. The first person she saw, as she emerged, pale as a ghost, from the cabin stair, was honest Jack Norton, whom she wildly implored to save her boy. He wanted to catch her up also, light as she was, in his arms, to put her in the boat which he saw them cutting clear at the stern—but she said “No, no—not alone!”—and throwing her child into his arms, turned calmly down the companion again into her husband’s cabin.

The boat, overfilled, had swamped, ere Jack—indebted probably to his humane lingering, for his life—could reach the side. The vessel was rapidly parting ; and, with the coolness of one to whom shipwreck was no untried peril, he caught up a hen-coop, and lashing me firmly to it and himself, launched it cautiously at the moment when a sudden lurch laid the deck almost flush with the water. The tide he knew was setting inshore, and would land us, provided we could resist for so long a period the buffetting of the waves, and piercing cold of a bitter March night. My mother had wrapped me, in her haste, in the furred

pelisse—which lay across the foot of my bed—and to this I was indebted, under providence, for my preservation from perishing of cold. Near the coop had lain an old broom, kept for cleaning it out; this Jack caught hold of, and dexterously using it as a sort of oar, gave to our course a little inclination towards a smoother and less rocky part of the beach than the frightful headland in front, which our frail vehicle could no more have touched unshattered, than we could have scaled its dizzy steeps, if it had !

I was within a few weeks of six years old when my warm-hearted preserver, (as I have been told a thousand times), brought me, naked and shivering, and exhausted with fright and sorrow—to his own snug cottage on the coast near R——. The news of the loss of the vessel had reached its intimates, and his rude helpmate was sitting—after an expedition of fruitless inquiry into the town—at her neglected fireside, pondering on its probable desolation, when her husband's well known whistle roused her from these desponding musings, to a joy almost too much for even her robust frame and spirit. In an instant, Jack was surrounded, and almost pulled to pieces, by delighted children,

among whom I was nearly knocked down, and wholly forgotten.

Bewildered and forlorn, I began to cry piteously for my mother, and Kate pushed aside her own noisy brood to take to her warm, though rough bosom, the shivering orphan. "What fine boy have you there, Jack?" said she, "and who does he belong to?" "God in heaven, that gave him me, only knows," answered her husband! "He was thrown into my arms by his poor young mother, just as the ship parted, and of all that sailed in her, its my belief there's none alive but he and I."

"God bless you for a kind-hearted fellow as you are!" exclaimed Kate—wiping away with her apron a big drop from her own eye that mingled on my cheek, with mine—"and you too, my little man!—you're welcome to a bite and sup with the children till we find out your friends, and in the mean time I'm sure you want sadly to be put to bed!" "I want my mother, sobbed I"—shrinking from hands so different from the delicate ones by which I had so long been tended—"Your mother is in heaven, my pretty child," said Kate soothingly, "and if you're a good boy and go to sleep, you will see her by and by." "It is

my father who is in heaven," answered I, reminded by the expression of my infant prayer. "Lord love ye, little innocent!" exclaimed Jack, "I doubt what you say is e'en but too true, let alone the Father of us all, that you speak of. There was a thin tall gentleman on board, who was often playing with this child, and he's gone too, sure enough! Do you know your papa's name, little boy?" "I am called Edmund, after papa," answered I,—“Edmund Meredith, and I'm going to see grandpapa in London.” I could say no more, even had my infant knowledge not been exhausted; for, worn out with grief and fatigue, I soon cried myself to sleep.

The name of my grandfather being inferred from that of my father and myself, Jack (after a day or two of true sailor enjoyment at his own fireside, and two or three more at the Cat and bagpipes,) walked with me in his hand, to a gentleman who had a share in his late vessel; partly to ascertain what chance there was of any thing being recovered from the wreck, and partly to get him to inquire out my relations. The total loss of Jack's little personal property, ascertained by the first query, as well as his own numerous family, rendered the additional burden of my maintenance very incon-

venient, especially in the eyes of Kate, who, though never unkind to the little foundling, began to wish him anywhere else. The result of the second inquiry proved that there *was* an old Mr. Meredith of great wealth in the city, who had a son, it was believed, in the East Indies ; but he lived so retired, and was in such infirm health, that very little was known about him.

At the suggestion of his informant, Jack went, but not immediately, (for with the sailor's deep sense of religion, he combined their odd professional antipathy to parsons,) to the clergyman of the parish ; and got him to write, on chance, to Mr. Meredith of Fenchurch Street. No answer came ; and Kate, alarmed at the increase of appetite occasioned by the keen air of England in the little gentleman, packed me off with her husband one fine day, to be delivered in person to my supposed grandfather.

It were hard to say which was least qualified, he or I, to find our way in London. We were both often near lost ; I by being rode over, while Jack stared in at shop windows ; and he by strolling into every public house where he spied a blue jacket, to tell the wonderful story of himself and little master.

We reached Fenchurch Street at last, and knocked at the door of a large dingy-looking house, rendered doubly dismal by nearly all its windows being shut up. After many vain attempts to get in, our impatient efforts at length brought down a deaf old woman, who (cautiously keeping the chained door no farther open than sufficed to protrude her thin sharp visage) bawled out that Mr. Meredith was dead and buried, and shut it in our faces. What was to be done now? At a neighbouring shop, Jack learned that the widow was gone to the seaside somewhere for the summer; and as it was getting dark, and we had both had enough of London, there was nothing for it but to hail the first Kentish stage, and get on the top of it to go home again.

“The child must go to the parish!” was Kate’s first exclamation on seeing me again. But somehow, she could never find in her heart to send me there; and Jack got his wages from his owners, and a subscription was made in the village to clothe me—and as for the “bite and sup,” as she called it, “I was welcome to that.”

But what would my poor mother have said to see the darling of her heart growing up a wild neglected blackguard in the outskirts of a sea-port town!

The oaths of the sailors, which had appeared to me so dreadful when I first went to sea—I could now hear unmoved, even from the lips of childhood (though something within forbade me ever to echo them) ; and the hymns, which it was her pride to teach me to repeat, were exchanged for snatches of idle ballads which I learned at the alchouse windows !

These, I soon found, might be turned to account ; as well as a flexibility of spine and limbs peculiar, I believe, to Indian children. There was, about a mile from my present abode, on the direct road to a celebrated bathing place, a very steep hill ; the passage of quality over which seldom failed to be annoyed by groupes of youngsters like myself, throwing nosegays, singing, or tumbling, (as their bent might chance to be), to extort an ill-bestowed halfpenny. In all branches of this idle vocation, I soon became an adept ; and I fear the hatfuls of halfpence thus earned, tended more to reconcile Kate to my protracted stay, than the humanity, in which she was not deficient.

My tumbling was really so wonderful, that travellers, even while they disapproved, often stopped to admire it ; and I redoubled my efforts to excite

fresh applause. I was one day stimulated by the sight of a carriage and four containing only ladies (as from gentlemen I seldom got any thing but re-proofs)—to attempt some unusual feats. I threw myself before the horses with reckless daring, (always trusting to my own agility to outstrip them,) and regardless of cries to desist, from the alarmed ladies—who had, by indiscreet previous liberality, spurred on my present rashness—I made a somerset intended to carry me clear across the road, but fell short, under the very feet of the leaders, whom the postboy—an urchin little bigger than myself—was unable to pull up.

Providence, which had once miraculously preserved, still watched over me. Stunned, but not materially injured, I was drawn from my perilous situation, and placed, nearly insensible, in the carriage beside the two ladies ; whose deep mourning dresses were soon stained with the blood that trickled profusely from a wound inflicted, not by a horse's hoof (for that would probably have been mortal), but a sharp stone on which I had lighted just above the eye.

The smelling-bottles with which the carriage was well stored, soon brought me to myself, and I

quite well remember a childish feeling of delight in once more finding myself seated on the knee of a person, who in dress and figure at least resembled my mother. "Thank God, he revives, Eleanor!" exclaimed the other and elder lady, whose close black bonnet almost hid her face. "What a beautiful creature it is! and so near lost in every sense of the word! God forgive me for the hand I narrowly missed having in his death,—I must try and make it up to him!"

"Where do you live, little man?" asked the younger lady. "At the white house down yonder, at Jack Norton's." "Is your father at sea, that he lets his boy run into danger and mischief so?" "My father's dead and my mother, and grandpapa too—I'm nobody's boy." "An orphan too! poor thing!" exclaimed the old lady, "what a lucky accident! but we must hear more at Jack Norton's."

The astonishment of Kate when a fine carriage stopped at her door, containing two ladies, and her bloody foster-child—may be easily imagined. To their mild hints that even an orphan might have been better trained and cared for—she indignantly replied, "More shame to them that should ask after him, and don't! The boy's well born, and come of

rich people ; and though they say old Meredith is gone to his master Old Nick, he could not take his money, that ought to be this poor child's, with him !”

“ Meredith !!!” exclaimed both ladies in a breath.—I spare the reader the *éclaircissement* which followed. The widow of my grandfather, a well meaning and warm-hearted, though cold-mannered woman, shed tears of unwonted feeling over his orphan heir ; and rejoiced that she had at length found one, on whom the burdensome accumulations of two penurious lives might legitimately centre.

It was not till I crossed the threshold of the white house, that I felt how unconsciously I loved Kate and the children. I turned back even from the fine carriage and impatient nags, to give another kiss to Mammy Norton ; and transfer to my favourite playfellow Bill, the silver sixpence which had nearly cost me my life. More substantial testimonials of gratitude were not forgotten by my new protectress, including schooling for all the sturdy vagabonds—and I was once more lifted into the carriage.

CHAPTER III.

For oh ! with sorrow I must own,
Through life's fair garden as I've gone,
Each flaunting, feckless flow'r that's blown
I've stoop'd to nip ;
Till a' the nobler plants are grown
Outo'er my grip.

T. SHERIDAN.

THAT my grandmother, for so she insisted on being called, should indulge long suppressed natural feelings by spoiling me, nobody will be surprised to hear. She was a good but weak-minded woman, whose originally bounded intellect had been restrained within the narrowest possible limits, by the monotony of a life, passed between her father's dull house in Bishopsgate Street, and the still duller residence of her husband, till the declining health and secession from business of the latter enabled her to vary its tenor by annual visits to Cheltenham

or Tunbridge. Mr. Meredith, who, struck with palsy soon after his second marriage, survived nearly all his faculties, retained to the last a spirit of rancorous hostility, which would have prevented his altering his will, even had he been in a state legally to do so ; and his son having been previously and formally disinherited, it was by a deed mutually executed in favour of the survivor of the marriage, that his widow succeeded to all his wealth. She had acquiesced in this arrangement, hoping it might enable her to do justice to his son, whose rights she had really no wish to invade, having already found her own ample fortune rather an incumbrance than a source of satisfaction. She had neither heart nor desire to spend ; and had she foreseen Mr. Meredith would so soon be unable to manage for her, she never would have married. Of the fate of his son and daughter, she remained as yet uncertain ; though a list of passengers lost in the “ John and Mary,” contained names answering to those of the unfortunate couple, who were conjectured to have perished.

For some months, during my grandmother’s summer residence at R——, I was suffered to run entirely wild ; provided it were within the safe

precincts of her handsome marine villa. If I no longer tumbled on the road to extract halfpence, I still climbed in the drawing-room to make visitors stare ; and I have since—I am ashamed to own, gone over from R—— to Seagrove, merely to see the bookcase on whose lofty summit I used to sit perched in defiance, till, by dread of broken bones, some darling object was extorted from grand-mamma.

She never thought, good woman ! of reasoning me out of this childish trick. She screamed, and entreated, and threatened, till I had learned total disregard of all such methods ; when set in opposition to praise, and smiles, and wonder at other and more suitable times. I suppose I should have gone on, writhing like an eel, and climbing like a cat, till I injured my spine—had not a sensible friend taken me one day to a neighbouring fair, where I saw all my boasted exploits so hopelessly out-done by a little wretch of a negro child, whom every body evidently pitied and despised, that I saw the exhibition in a new and degrading light, and would never perform again.

We removed to town ; and, as a necessary consequence, I was put to a day-school in the neigh-

bourhood. I soon liked school, chiefly because I was better amused there than at home; and only regretted that evening must come, and must be spent in a gloomy old-fashioned parlour, ill lighted with one pair of candles; to get the benefit of which, I must learn my lesson, or read my story-book within hearing of four cross old people, scolding each other at whist. I question which is most to be pitied, a boy brought up among precise elderly women, who have never had children—or the old ladies themselves, to whom a lively child seems possessed with an evil spirit! At school I could learn nothing but my task; and I wanted to learn ten thousand things besides: but no one there had time to tell me, and when I came home nobody knew or cared any thing about them.

It was thus, that from my earliest sojourn under the roof of Mrs. Meredith, I felt that sense of mental thralldom and restriction which through so many a year so painfully haunted me; and which rendered my late transition to a more liberal circle, almost like translation to a superior sphere! I did not know what continual reaction pressed upon, and paralysed the efforts of an expanding mind; I only knew that there *should* be something

more in life, than either the school-room round the corner, or the parlour in Fenchurch Street could afford !

It was no fault of Mrs. Meredith's if she was so precisely what the French express by the felicitous word—*borné*. She strove to do her duty even beyond the (for her) lavish expenditure of money and kindness. She invaded the sanctity of her *tête-à-tête* with a starched uninteresting female companion for my sake, by the admission of a tutor ; to whom, contrary to the usual custom of boys, I looked forward as to a new toy. But such a tutor as could by any possibility suit such an establishment, was not likely to rise beyond its *calibre*. Middle age, mild manners, a soft voice, and knowledge of whist, were the chief characteristics inquired into. Latin and Greek were stipulated for, as a matter of course, though—as I was to be *very* independent—my education need not be hurried on at any great sacrifice of health or recreation.

I could not be so unhappy at the sea-side, as in London, although Mr. Maude added as little to my happiness as he took from it. He taught me Latin faster I believe than he even intended ; and

I learned it because it was better than learning nothing. But when I asked him about ships, or shells, or sea-birds, or any of the ten thousand animate or inanimate objects with which ocean teems, he knew no more about them than the oyster which vegetates in its depths. How I longed to make once more acquaintance with sailors and fishermen, and their ragged urchins, who ran about and did as they pleased ; and I gave more than one sigh to Mammy Norton's cottage.

Years passed over in this dull routine ; rendered latterly less tolerable by our marine excursions being exchanged for water-drinking places in the interior. Mrs. Meredith was, like all rich idlers, fanciful about her health ; and feeling the sea breezes, as she thought, too sharp for a meagre and attenuated frame—made a regular experiment on all the celebrated mineral springs in England. These were sad summers to me—for when I had heard all the bands, and visited all the Spas, and made faces at all the waters—what amusement could a boy of ten to fourteen find in scenes of heartless dissipation, the gaiety of which indeed—such as it was—never reached him at all. Mrs. Meredith's whist parties might be more miscella-

neous at Tunbridge than in London, but they were not one jot more entertaining ; and if the penance of an airing was to be endured, Oxford Street and Hyde Park were worth a hundred of the High Street of Cheltenham. There is a discipline observed by young practitioners in physic, called “ walking the hospitals.” I wonder whether it is more or less irksome than I found its somewhat analogous routine of “ walking the watering places !”

With another year, matters grew both *worse* and better. In the former view of the subject, I was now expected to attend Mrs. Meredith to the stiff sepulchral parties, in which her annual sojourn at Cheltenham had embarked her ; to take an occasional fourth at whist, and practise, (upon any but inviting damsels) the lessons of politeness and gallantry, which my age and height rendered indispensable. But then *per contra*—some Indian general, forty years of whose life had been passed on horseback—suggested the propriety of my learning to ride ; and a pony was procured accordingly. As, however, I only rode with my tutor, whose unequestrian habits dictated the safest of all possible paces, I never remember being thoroughly exhilarated by the exercise, except once ; when I was

fairly run away with, and landed—to the horror of my pedagogue and my own delight—in a ditch !

With all this sense of monotony, which made my existence like that of Sterne's caged starling—let me do justice to the memory of Mrs. Meredith ! Her sole feeling, since Providence cast me at her feet, had been to do an act of tardy reparation, completely and conscientiously.

She forgot her indolence to watch over me, her habits of penury, to indulge, and her long years of selfishness, to care for me. She gave me what she believed to be the best of educations—a private one ; for she was one of those who shudder in virtuous horror at the promiscuous intercourse of large schools. She forgot, or rather she never knew—that to render domestic education efficient, there must be infused into it somewhat of the emulation and collisions of a public one—there must be a master-spirit to supply deficiencies—and knowledge of the world to eschew pedantry—in short, every thing that was completely wanting in Mr. Maude !

For lack of any thing else to do, I read a good deal occasionally ; and of course, for want of direction, chiefly poetry and novels. But their contrast

was so ludicrous with the singularly prosaic existence, of which alone I knew any thing—that I entered on life with a bias exactly opposite to that of most other young persons ; and far from expecting in it features of romance and enthusiasm which it fails to exhibit—all the traits of both, which may be found on even its ordinary surface, came upon me with a force of novelty and contrast which rendered them doubly delightful.

Matters went on thus, till I was nineteen ; and except that (Mr. Maude being inducted in a rectory)—I rode alone, or with a groom who had an eye to my mastership of the horse, and connived accordingly—and that (Mrs. Meredith from increasing infirmity now declining all society), I associated a little with persons of my own age—no material change took place in the sober *routine* of my existence. To say that I never looked forward to emancipation, might be exceeding the truth ; but to say that I wished for it at the expense of losing my benefactress, would be doing me injustice. As the time, indeed, approached, which must put me in possession of all she had endowed me with—I learned to value it more—and to honour the rectitude which made her look back on her conduct

to me as her chief consolation. She was found one day as if asleep in her chair ; and as she never woke more, I was saluted as heir to £200,000 !

I had too long steadily eyed this bright reversion to be dazzled or overset by it. I had too long settled what I had to do with it, to feel at any loss on the subject ; but how to *enjoy it* was a lesson I had entirely to learn !—and like all novices, I was but too much at the mercy of my teachers. I took for granted—as I had been forced to do many things besides—that the received modes of being happy were infallible ; and as all my new, and some of my old companions “ babbled ” incessantly, not of “ green fields,” but of green *turf*, horses, hounds, and races, I launched deeply into the mysteries of the stud and kennel.

I had not forgotten the excitement of being run away with by a pony—and justly concluding that being run away with by a hunter or racer must exceed it by the square of their respective velocities—I tried the experiment ; I cannot say that it succeeded. First emotions are always the most acute and delightful—but at least I distanced for a while the fiend *Ennui*, who, I now learned for the first time, had been the incubus that clung to

me through life, like the “ Old Man of the Moun-tain.”

The contrast of bacchanalian orgies with habits of conventual sobriety, was first odious—then *piquant*—but it would not do long ! I had lost too much of my life half asleep already to waste many waking moments over the bottle—and half a dozen Champagne headaches brought back the feelings of Fenchurch Street too effectually to be again hazarded. Gaming was taken up as a variety—but cards reminded me of Fenchurch Street too—and money could be transferred at Newmarket just as quickly and more pleasantly, in the open air. I always hated confinement, I suppose because I had been so much pent up as a boy—and lighted rooms always brought back the parties of Cheltenham in disagreeable association of ideas. In short, after having made, for a couple of years, a round,—scarce less fatiguing than the campaign among hospitals above alluded to—of all the boasted pleasures of young men of fortune—I caught myself at last, yawning and fidgetting in my splendid apartments in St. James’s—just as I had done on the old, hard, narrow, scanty hair-sofa in Fenchurch Street !

If my heart was no lighter, however, my pockets

were considerably so. All young heirs are proverbially pigeons ; what must I have been, who never heard of hawks, till I smarted in their talons ? All the hobbies of young men are expensive, and during their successive reign keep their heads under water—but *I*, to make up for lost time, had half a score at once, and rode them so fast, that it was no wonder I was ere long—to use an appropriate cant phrase—fairly *floored*.

The tangible cash left by Mrs. Meredith, on which no restrictions were laid, was exhausted ; and the bulk of the joint fortunes of herself and my grandfather could not be claimed by an heir—(whose existence had not been contemplated when their settlements were drawn out)—till he should attain the legal age. This, as I wanted some months of twenty-one, I took the usual methods to get over ; and they were not the less expensive that—till I invoked their succour—I had never heard of any Jews (old clothes-men excepted) more modern than those of Scripture !

The whole details of the single combat *à l'outrance*, waged by spendthrift heirs with Father Time, being as familiar to all classes of readers as, thanks to Sir Walter—they have now become with

those of the joust and tourney of olden days, I spare myself a blush, and the reader a yawn, by leaving them henceforth to his imagination. All I cannot allow him to take for granted is, that in the midst of my revel of folly, I loved, or even endured vice. The only redeeming quality in my precise and negative education, was its *purity*—which made even slight deviations uncomfortable, and grosser ones impossible.

The word *principle* had never I believe been mentioned before me. It was too stern and masculine for the minor code which governed the proprieties of Fenchurch Street. But the constitutional exemption from evil propensities which nature had bestowed, was unconsciously strengthened by the absence of evil examples; and Mrs. Meredith—perhaps justly—thought her labours, such as they were, rewarded, when she heard me characterised, by less partial observers, as “a lad in whom there was no harm.” There was even—I may perhaps be allowed to say *now*, when I have long been aware how very little it amounted to—some good in me. I *grew* up liberal and charitable—because from my childhood the indulgence of such feelings was a rare and stolen luxury. I was good natured

and accommodating, because my temper—naturally easy—had never been soured by actual unkindness ; while it had been kept in salutary check by a long course of insensible restraint. In short I had some good qualities, which culture or misfortune might develop—and abundance of faults, which, as no one had even pointed them out, I was not particularly likely to discover.

As to my tastes, they must have hitherto lain—like many other things—in abeyance ; for they certainly did not find their spontaneous gratification in any one of the objects to which I suffered myself to be devoted. Horses, dogs, wine, cards, and company were at first but so, so—after a couple of years familiarity, I wished them all at the devil ; but then I had no other “ Slave of the Lamp,” ready to summon in their stead.

Falling in love I had tried—but not with success sufficient to feel delightfully engrossed. I was not fortunate in my chance superficial acquaintance with the fair sex ; and of domestication in a fascinating family circle, I had not even an idea. The young ladies I danced with at balls, or flirted with on race-grounds, were so evidently in love with themselves, or with my thousands—so

manifestly careless whether I broke my neck when I rode, so that I lost my heart or at least my gloves, when I betted—that I came to care for them pretty much as I did for my stud, my companions, and the world—that is to say, not at all.

It was particularly unlucky ; because I now heard, on the unquestionable authority of a brother *ennuyé*, that falling in love—as a stimulus—was worth a hundred of racing. But as, to deserve that character, it must, I presumed, have the excitement both of reality and uncertainty, I could not profit by the information. I never somehow could meet with eyes worth looking *into* half a dozen times, which did not tell me before that, all they had to say ; and if it was not exactly couched in the anticipative Hibernicism of “ Ask Papa ”—it was too much to the same purpose not to be worse than a fox worried in cover.

With a desultory bachelor acquaintance, chiefly confined to loungers of my own unprivileged class, whom the successful diligence of others had enriched, without ennobling, and shaken loose from commerce, without grafting them on aristocracy, I had few if any connexions in the world ;

and often felt cruelly the want of some fireside, by whose domestic privacy I might vary the tiresome routine of being a "young man about town." I suppose I thirsted for conversation—for of all mental luxuries, that was the one in which I had been most systematically starved. But the things about which people talked did not interest me. I was too thoughtless for politics—too volatile to talk merely of the weather—and too good-natured or too stupid to care much for scandal. Sometimes—but rarely—a scrap of literary chit-chat, made me prick up my ears, and feel as if readers were creatures to be envied; but soon either an awkward feeling of being "thrown out," or some dull jest about *blue stockings*, (then a novel term of reproach), would smother the latent glow, and make me relapse into inanity, to avoid mortification or ridicule.

I did read occasionally, however, chiefly because it amused me more than any thing else. I even kept up my Latin—because I happened to have a pocket Virgil more portable than any other book—and because Latin with me was associated with boyish excitement, and therefore with pleasure. I skimmed at odd times the poem or novel of the

day ; but be it remembered that it was in the former the age of “ Della Crusca,”—and that in the latter department there were then no “ giants in the land”—and it will not be matter of wonder if I rose from the perusal, thinking even books themselves—“ vanity and vexation !”

Three years more rolled away in a course of idleness and extravagance, which, while it had made serious inroads on my fortune, had not given me in exchange even the semblance of enjoyment. Not the withered leaf which is caught up and whirled by every blast in contrary directions, is, and I speak from sad experience, a more contemptible and pitiable object, than a young man such as I then was ; the sport not of impulse, but of accident ; without purpose, plan, or goal in life ; a prey to sharpers, the property of profligate companions, and neither acquainted with, nor on good terms with himself.

CHAPTER IV.

Barbs ! Barbs ! how swift, alas ! ye flew,
Her neat postwaggon trotting in !

CANNING.

I WAS, in the autumn of 18—, on my way from one set of races to another, in the not very enviable mood of one who, having just smarted under the consequences of his rashness, feels himself nevertheless destined (by his folly, not his stars) to plunge into farther losses and entanglements ; when, at a village inn in the north of England, my eye was caught by the following advertisement :

• HEIRS WANTED.

“ The nearest of kin, if any, to the deceased Gideon Aspinall, M. D., who settled in America

somewhere about the year 17—, may hear of something to their advantage, by applying to J. T., solicitor at D——.

“ N.B. Dr. Aspinall is believed to have belonged originally to Hampshire, and is known to have survived two brothers, who both died without issue.”

I fairly started off my chair with delight, as I laid down the newspaper ; not at the chance of increased wealth, held out by the advertisement, but the prospect of excitement afforded by the pursuit. The identity of the singular name of the deceased with that of my poor mother, his profession and residence, left scarce the shadow of a doubt that it was the same eccentric relative, in quest of whose succession she had gone to the new world. Was it now unexpectedly to open to her son ? Of our relationship, I had, it is true, no direct proof save that afforded by my knowledge of the voyage and its object, and the tacit one furnished by my admission to the presence of the recluse ; nor would these inferences, however obvious, be of any use in a court of justice. But, with the sanguine feelings of one stimulated by the novelty of enterprise, I imagined there would be little difficulty in recovering, either in England or America, the lost link of

affinity ; and as a first step in the business, I astonished my disappointed landlord, by ordering, at that late hour in the evening, a postchaise for D —, a town about eight miles off, to which the advertisement referred.

The attorney, a shrewd pettifogger, indebted to some Transatlantic connexions for the honour and possible emoluments of the inquiry, heard my extra-judicial statement with wonderful patience, and growing sympathy for a client, who, to the chances of a fortune in reversion, added the more tangible recommendation of one in possession.

He told me the only rival claimant who had yet appeared, was a Mrs. Clitheroe, the wife, as he understood of a half-pay officer, and related through her parents (French Canadians), to the American Cræsus. “ I have never seen the old lady,” added he, “ but as she writes, it seems, indifferent English, and the captain is laid up with the gout, the correspondence has been carried on by a daughter, a clever sharp damsel, I should say, who gives a wonderful clear account of the family pedigree. The relationship, however, is quite distant, a third or fourth cousin or so, and your’s, if we can only establish it, will cut it out and out, of course. The

similarity of name to your mother's, is a strong presumption in your favour, and will have its weight in the eye of the law. Mrs. Clitheroe has never seen or heard of the old Doctor since she was about five years old, at which time he spent some weeks at her father's in the beginning of the American troubles, when his loyalty to England obliged him to be in hiding. He came forward greatly in her cause afterwards it seems, but meeting with little thanks, got disgusted, and shut himself up in the woods with a couple of black slaves for the last thirty years of his life ; rambling about all the summer among the Indians, and letting nobody else come near him. His land, in the mean time, notwithstanding his doing nothing to improve it, was getting valuable in spite of him, and he has left behind at least L.40,000.

The result of my conference with the lawyer was, that in addition to the information which might be incidentally elicited by the advertisement—he would instantly write to his correspondent in America to make inquiries there ; particularly of the black servants, to whom the Doctor had bequeathed his solitary mansion ; and who, still active and vigorous, though in very advanced life, would probably recol-

lect the remarkable incident of my infant visit, and the nature of the ties on which it was permitted by the recluse.

Having quickened his diligence in these investigations by a retaining fee, I left the attorney almost as much interested in their result as myself; and far more disposed to regard with an evil eye the more solidly founded claims of my rival Miss Clitheroe. “I dare say she’s an ugly old maid,” said he—with professional antipathy to cleverness in women—“her letter was not that of a girl I assure you! So correct and well worded, and to the purpose!” She mentions that, on receiving some documents they expect from Canada, she and her mother will come over here from Manchester, where the father I believe is barrack-master, or some such thing. I’ll let you know when I hear from them.”

I went on to my destination; my head fuller of America than Doncaster, and engaged in a stake to which even the St. Leger was as nothing. If I had been to draw omens of my success in the one, from the result of the other, they would have been very discouraging. With thoughts pre-occupied, and a mind elsewhere, I betted with more than ordinary indiscretion, and lost more than even now I love to remember.

It weaned me, however, and as it happened, for life, from racing. I sold my horses, and went up to town to inquire more in earnest than I had ever yet done, into the exact state of my affairs. The sudden seizure and long mental and bodily imbecility of my grandfather, had unexpectedly thrown his whole multifarious concerns into the hands of his head clerk—the only person by whom they were at all understood ; and in whom he had always shown that limited degree of confidence which he was disposed to place in any human being. Mrs. Meredith—rendered doubly helpless by the incapacity of him whom she had married for financial energy—had no resource but to trust implicitly in his deputy, and ere long, prosperous successor in business ; and the flattering accounts he laid before her of her increasing funds, were highly satisfactory.

With this gentleman—who by degrees availed himself of rising prosperity to indulge in a style of living very opposite to the penurious habits of his late patron—I had always been on the best terms. When, before coming of age, I had embarked, from reluctance to inform him of my necessities, in ruinous transactions with Jews—he gently chid

me for having doubted his willingness to make the necessary advances ; and ever since I had found in him but too dangerous a facility in answering my frequent demands. It was therefore no surprise to me to learn from him—with many expressions of almost parental regret—the considerable incroachments on my capital ; nor was it a source of great disappointment when, with reiterated assurances of readiness to supply me at all times—he evaded my faint attempts to see exactly how I stood in his books. The sum which remained there was so large, as to seem—even to one who had spent nearly a third of it in five years—almost inexhaustible ; and by resolving to limit my expenditure in future to its income, I gained from myself and my indulgent banker, the praise of rare, though late prudence.

My winter in town partook in some degree of this tardy infusion of wisdom. It was the least dissipated I had ever passed, and under the auspices of my banker—who had removed to the west end of the town, and saw a great deal of company—I mixed more in what might be styled good, if not the best society London can afford. It was to feel more perhaps than ever the want of a profession *

or pursuit. The former, I felt it was too late to embark in ; and the only employment nature seemed to have chalked out for me, was too much at variance with my habits to be thought of.

This was the superintendence and improvement of a small estate in Gloucestershire ; which, taken in payment of a bad debt by Mr. Meredith shortly before his illness, he had not lived to dispose of. His successor would have converted it into money immediately, but for a fancy of the widow's, to whom of course it now belonged, and who, though detesting the country herself, had an English prejudice in favour of landed property, and always pleased herself with thinking I should one day or other settle down into a squire.

So the old hall was kept from falling, and the acres from the hammer, in compliance with her express stipulation ; and in the first dutiful emotions which succeeded her demise, I went to take a view of them. But the mansion, with its grass-grown court and ivy-mantled walls, and long-privileged household band of rooks and owls, seemed fitter for an old hermit than a young heir ; and the land, which was cultivated in the worst style of that agriculturally barbarous country, seemed as if

Tull himself could not redeem it from weeds and rushes. So, looking upon the thing itself altogether as an incumbrance, and with sovereign contempt on its scanty rent-roll of some two or three hundreds a-year, I never thought more of it, till asked by a neighbouring proprietor, whom I met doing penance in town, why I did not come down and settle in Gloucestershire, and turn farmer? I should as soon have thought of turning Mahometan; but the honest man painted so enthusiastically the delights of an improver, the pleasures of a sportsman, and the blended duties and honours of a justice of the peace, that I could not help listening, and fancying it possible twenty years hence to think and talk as he did.

Early in the summer, as soon as it was possible for a vessel to arrive from the St. Lawrence, I had notice from lawyer T—— of an expected visit from the ladies of the Clitheroe family, which was however delayed from time to time by the severe illness of the captain, and the impossibility of leaving him. I had loitered about D—— and its vicinity till I was tired, and was about to depart in despair, —since, after all, (as I did not choose actually to confront my rivals) the result of their interview

might as well be communicated by letter ; when one evening, on my return from a pleasure excursion in the neighbourhood, the lawyer sent me word they had been with him for a hurried hour or two, and that, anxious about the invalid, they intended returning to Manchester that night in the only direct conveyance for that place, which would pass through from London about twelve o'clock.

“ If you want to see something of them—and faith they're both fine women, the young one especially—what say you to taking the remaining place, (there are three of themselves, including a maid) and going as far as Manchester with them ? There's much to be learned in a coach sometimes, and the mamma seems chatty enough ; besides, you can take a sly look of the daughter, and see if a matrimonial compromise would suit, in case of the worst, without their suspecting a word of the matter. Not that they have much chance of ultimate success however, for though they *are* third cousins sure enough, old black Cæsar is ready to swear he heard the old gentleman say your mother was his nearest of kin when he sent him for you to Albany. Hearsay evidence to be sure is not very decisive, but once in possession of that fact, we'll find means

to establish it. Perhaps you may worm something out of the old girl to-night."

"God forbid!" thought I, and this base insinuation was very near making me give up all idea of a journey, the romance of which had been a strong temptation. But I remembered that people, however communicative, seldom speak of law-affairs in a coach, and resolving to keep a thousand miles from the subject, I hurried off to bespeak the place. This of course could only be conditionally promised, if not already held by a previous occupant from London; and I awaited the arrival of the "Telegraph," as if my life depended on the contents of the way-bill.

"Three insides empty—one full!" was the report when it stopped. On the former, the three females had of **course** a double claim of precedence **and** courtesy, and my only hope therefore lay in persuading the other inside to resign in my favour. "What great events from trifling causes spring!" The servant of this excellent old gentleman had forgot to put up his fleecy hosiery cap, and rheumatism shrunk from a night journey without it; so, on hearing that a traveller wished much to push on to **Manchester**, he was heartily glad to exchange

his seat in the Telegraph for my warm bed at the George.

The manœuvre was so quickly effected in the dark, and by the unofficial ministry of “Boots” of the George, that it escaped registry; and I proceeded to Manchester under the name as well as auspices of Mr. John Maberly. “So much the better,” thought I, “should my fair fellow-travellers have enough of Eve in them ever to inquire who was their companion!”

There was for some time no danger of their being too communicative, as though I was piqued out of sleep by the novelty of my situation, the rest of the party had earned, by previous fatigue, a well-won right to repose.

The morning burst forth at length in all its summer beauty; and awaking from a short dose into which I had at length fallen—the first object my eyes encountered were those of my opposite neighbour Mrs. Clitheroe—who, with her finger on her lip, and a glance at her still sleeping daughter—gave me, in a friendly though suppressed voice, and with a decided foreign accent, and frank foreign manner—a cheerful morning salutation.

“*La pauvre enfant !*” said she, fondly looking at

the sleeper beside her, and folding her thick veil more closely to exclude the light, "she has much need of sleep, she has been such a watcher of late. And yet I grudge her losing this *magnifique* sunrise! a sight so seldom seen in a great smoky town; and which in my happy young days I used to see every morning at dear Montreal!"

I had never seen it above twice in my life anywhere; though I did not the less feel its delicious influence. Who indeed, however estranged by luxury or blunted by daily toil, can gaze unmoved on that dewy and virgin veil in which nature robes herself on a midsummer morning, as if—born yesterday—she had never known either winter or sorrow? When one bound of the joyous sun laughs into utter oblivion the shadows both of night and misfortune—when each unstained glossy June leaf is a cup meet for the dews of heaven, and every liquid tone of the soaring lark seems ethereal as the element it loves! But however I might *feel* all this at the time I am writing of—I could certainly not thus have expressed it in words—nor will any one wonder if, in my peculiar circumstances, I should rather have preferred a stolen glance under my fair rival's impenetrable

veil, to all the sunrises ever imagined by *Claude* himself.

If, however, I was denied seeing, I was at least indulged by hearing of her. It was not in the frank loving nature of Mrs. Clitheroe to be silent, even to a stranger, on so favourite a theme; and she expatiated, in the innocence of her heart, on the duty, affection, and abilities of her *chère Pauline*—as a more manœuvring mother might have done if aware of my name and pretensions, and desirous of achieving what my friend the attorney had professionally called—a “matrimonial compromise!”

Perhaps I ought here to describe this charming woman, with whom I then more than half fell in love; and whose counterpart through a long life I have never chanced to meet with. Probably originality and *naïveté* were of all qualities the most likely to make a deep impression on one who had never before encountered them; and Mrs. Clitheroe was the very personification of both. Her physiognomy was the exact index of her character. Never was volubility so superfluous as this dear woman's; for long before even her fluent, though mongrel eloquence, could embody her ideas,

they were legible in her bright speaking hazel eyes; and mantling round a mouth whose every motion revealed a fresh expression, and which in one mood—seemed made for uttering *bon mots*, worthy of Scarron himself—and then in another, (and not less becoming one) for setting them off by bits of simplicity, which breathed as freshly of fifteen and the woods of Canada, as if time and herself had alike forgotten to move. *A petit nez retroussé* completed the contour of a face whose predominant expression was an almost infantine guilelessness—but over which occasional shades of sentiment, and even of melancholy, passed like clouds over a sunny landscape, only to leave it brighter than ever. Her tall figure was still as slight and girlish as it had been twenty years before, and a not ungraceful negligence of costume was in keeping with all the rest of the artless picture.

I really got so interested in this matronly specimen of unadulterated nature, that I might have fairly forgotten she had a daughter, had not her conversation kept me in mind. Her husband, she told me, was an *ancien militaire* of excellent family, and *aimable comme il y en a peu*—but by making a runaway match in Canada some five and twenty

years before, when she was only fifteen—they had disobliged both their families. Hers, she said, had long since relented, and given her all they had—their blessing ; but Monsieur's English friends had left him to the consequences of his imprudence—embarrassed circumstances through life—and now in its decline, to the scanty emoluments of a Barrack-mastership, for whose duties he was nearly disabled, and which obliged him—(invalid as he was)—to reside in an expensive and detestable manufacturing town.

“ Under all this,” continued she, “ you must not wonder that a prospect of any change for the better is welcome.” Women will talk of what runs in their head ; and out came the whole story of the American Doctor and his succession ! I would have given the world to stop her, so like an caves-dropper did I feel—but I could only have done so by revealing myself, and looking the fool I felt—so I let her go on—particularly, as through the less scrupulous attorney, I was in possession of all the legal part of her information.

“ *Eh bien, Monsieur*”—said she—“ *d'abord si ça ne vous ennuie pas*—this American millionaire turns out to have been my mother's second cousin.

She was *de race Anglaise*, a *bonne petite femme*, whom my father married when on a visit at New York, purely out of chivalry to rescue her from the troubles, and from the *cnnui* of marrying some cousin of her own—(this very doctor himself, for ought I know.) However, some years after, when in danger of being shot by the Yankees, for some bold stroke in favour of England, this *ancien amant* crossed the river in an Indian canoe, and threw himself on my father's hospitality. *Je m'en souviens comme hier !*—though I was only about five years old ;—and many a fright my mother got by the old oddity snatching me up in his arms, and carrying me with him into the woods to catch butterflies and seek simples. His fancy for me was very great—I suppose on account of his old love for *Maman* : and, strange to say ! I was very fond of him too. He used to call me his little wife, and say he would come back, when the war was over, and take me to England. But it seems the *patrie* he was always talking of turned out but a stepmother to him, and he turned *Sauvage*, and spent the rest of his days in the woods. If he had made a will at all, I think he would have remembered his little *Fanchon*—but none can be

found, and we must try to come in as nearest of kin. I daresay we should have had no difficulty but for a *Monsieur Meredith*—a young *vaurien*, who will spend on race horses what would make the happiness of an honest veteran—and his whole *ménage*. *Dieu sait* little would put *le papa* and I at our ease—but *Pauline*! to see her as *distinguée* by the gifts of fortune, as she is by those of nature, would put me out of my wits with joy!”

During this artless narrative—we were fast approaching the town of Manchester, the residence of my fair companions, and I began to despair of catching, before we should separate, a single glance of her for whose sake I had made the journey; while my curiosity was enhanced tenfold by the *naive* eulogiums of her mother.

We had just wound slowly to the top of the last hill, and were preparing to descend, when the coachman—there being neither guard nor outside passengers—got off himself to put on the drag, and the horses set off at full speed without a driver. Had it been anywhere but at the entrance of a crowded town, I should have trusted to their daily habits, to carry them—(barring obstacles)—safely to the inn door; but here the case was

alarming indeed ! One of the sharpest turns and narrowest lanes in Great Britain lay right before us, and acquainted as we both were with the localities, Mrs. Clitheroe and I not only foresaw our inevitable overturn, but could calculate on its very site and inclination. There was little time for awful anticipation, the spot was but a few yards off. We almost touched it, when Mrs. Clitheroe, foreseeing that the coach must fall over on the side where her daughter sat—touched her, to give her some slight preparation. The sleeper started up, and naturally put forward her head to see what was the matter. The glass on her side was still up, having resisted my efforts to let it down. The head of the scarce conscious girl was in immediate and dangerous contact with it, when her mother's cry of "*Ma fille ! Les vitres !*" called my attention to a state of things which left no alternative to any man of humanity. I had nothing for it but to stretch out my arm to force the window—in so doing I got entangled in its wooden frame-work, the coach upset before I could extricate myself, and the consequence was—a broken arm !

When I came to myself,—which was not the

sooner for having, in addition to my fracture, received a severe contusion on the head, and on my body the whole dead weight of a female Falstaff of a French nurse, who, having accompanied the family from Canada, had been brought to D—— to give corroborating testimony to its history—a hackney coach had been drawn up alongside of our shattered vehicle, and its driver was inquiring where the gentleman, (Mr. Maberly as I was by courtsey called,) chose to be driven to. The grateful mother, who conceived herself the cause of my accident, would hear of no alternative but my being carried to her house. “*Chez nous, chez nous ! cela va sans dire !*” cried she, talking French as she always did when her feelings were excited. “Run Marie and send for the doctor, and tell *le papa* we are all safe !”

I was too much stunned and confused to make much opposition ; or if I did, it was borne down by the clamours of genuine hospitality. Perhaps I was not sorry to be saved, by an opportune return of faintness, all further controversy ; and when it left me, I was under the hands of the surgeon, and had no leisure for sentiment. My fracture—a very serious compound one—was reduced ; and when all was

over, I was laid quiet in a shabby but not uncomfortable room, with the old mountain of a French *bonne*, who had partly caused my disaster, to attend on and watch over me.

CHAPTER V.

Il est un autre amour, fils craintif de l'estime
Soumis dans les chagrins, constant dans ses désirs
Que la vertu soutient, que la candeur anime
Qui résiste aux rigueurs, qui croit dans les plaisirs.
Voilà le Dieu, que mon cœur veut pour maître !

VOLTAIRE.

THERE was something, barring the plebeian and every-day character of the accident itself, so romantic and novel-like, in being thus unexpectedly deposited under the roof of my unknown rival, that I had nothing for it but either to follow immemorial precedent, and fall in love, or fortify myself by ridicule against a *denouement* so common-place and thread-bare. My fortitude was not put to any very immediate test ; for Pauline did not, after the manner of damsels of romance, who combined leech-craft with their heroic qualities, personally

conduct, or even superintend my cure ; but her gentle influence (for I instinctively knew it to be hers) was evident in the exquisite neatness of all my sick-room arrangements, and the delicate correspondence between my allotted portions of nourishment, and the somewhat wayward taste of a convalescent.

The very books which, as I became able to sit up a little, cheered my solitude, were, as I was sure, of her selection. They were addressed rather to the tastes I ought to have had, than to those I then possessed ; for, with a happy choice of light and entertaining reading, was blended a sprinkling of higher matter. Milton and Cowper, known to me before chiefly by name, were there to lure me on to studies more sublime and sacred still ; and it is difficult for any one, who has never associated as I then did, ideas of gloom and austerity and homeliness with religion, to imagine how much my unpractised eyes and mind were conciliated by the elegant exterior, the evidently *used*, yet perfectly *unsullied* aspect of volumes, which female perusal could alone have kept thus uncontaminated, during years of daily converse !

I read more during this three weeks confinement

than in the three previous years of life, and thought at least ten times as much ; but in spite of my grave or gayer resolutions, it was chiefly of Miss Clitheroe. I had only seen her—if seeing it could be called—through the tantalizing medium of an impenetrable veil, so that beyond a lively remembrance of a slight and graceful person, imagination had ample scope in creating the rest, and curiosity full exercise in divining it.

No schoolboy, on the eve of the holidays, ever slept less or fidgetted more than I did, the night before I was to be permitted to join the family in a parlour on the same floor with my bed-room. I had received occasional visits both from Captain and Mrs. Clitheroe, during the progress of my convalescence. Those of the former were rendered less frequent by infirmity ; the latter I felt confident were often curtailed by the considerate kindness of her daughter, for there escaped more than once, as she would start up in the midst of one of her imaginative flights—a playful “ *Qu'en dira Pauline ?* ” which betrayed a more thoughtful monitress without.

I rose at least two hours sooner than I had done since my accident, or than any usual habits when

in health, and awaited in a state of great excitement the summons to change a scene, which had begun to pall grievously on my senses. I had contracted a very painful degree of acquaintance with the shepherds and shepherdesses, who, in blue instead of verdant meadows, disported on my old-fashioned bed-curtains. I had, during the two or three nights when I threatened fever, taken umbrage at their unnatural hue and distorted attitudes; and I never afterwards was thoroughly reconciled to them. If I drew aside the curtains to get rid of them, my eye would dwell with unpleasant minuteness, on the grotesque pattern of a dingy flock-paper, to whose once bright crimson the smoke of half a century had lent the purplish cast so common in superannuated pulpits. The chest of drawers at the foot of the bed had been curiously perforated by industrious insects, till its whole surface had become reticulated, and a feverish patient could not altogether get out of his head, as he gazed on their labours, the horrible idea of Lewis's ballad.

"The worms they crept out, and the worms they crept in."

There was a table which disturbed my equanimity by being warped at least two inches from the hori-

zontal ; and I sometimes woke in a fright, fancying books, rushlight and all, going down the inclined plane with the velocity of a *Badaud de Paris* in a *Montagne Russe* !

Since these had ceased to affect my happiness, it had been much impaired by the hopeless nature of the look-out from my window, which, while every thing like a prospect was effectually barred from view by a hideous range of spinning-mills, admitted just such a glimpse of about a yard in breadth, of a pleasing country beyond, as to make me long to act the part of Guy Fawkes, and blow the whole fabric, with its industrious denizens in the air. Then I heard the ceaseless swing of the huge engine which, like time and tide, seemed to know neither pause nor intermission ; and, when it pleased Eolus to be spiteful, a volume of dense smoke penetrated the chinks of my antediluvian window-frames, and made Egyptian darkness within and without. Small evils these, some will say, in derision of my effeminacy, but not those who from an early age have chosen their own domicile with all the exquisite tact of selfishness, and who, in long ignorance of inconveniences, have invested them with all the magnitude of misfortunes.

All these minor miseries, however, served only to enhance my impatience for release, and my relish for emancipation. About an hour after breakfast, I heard on the stairs, the well-known step and joyous prattle of Mrs. Clitheroe ; and when, with her usual foreign frankness, she tendered her arm to conduct me to the sitting room, I never was more excited by handing a celebrated beauty to the top of a dance at a race ball. “ *Le voici !* ” cried she with good-natured triumph. “ *Le pauvre garçon ! vite donc Pauline un fauteuil !* ” There was but one arm-chair in the room, that of the old captain, and he was hastily preparing to evacuate it in my favour, when his daughter flew to lend her support ; and I had thus an opportunity of contemplating her for a moment, unembarrassed by the usual forms of a first meeting.

She was not at all like the creature of my fancy. I had, I know not why, invested her with fair hair, blue eyes, a pale and pensive countenance, and a languid softness of manner. I saw before me, gracefully bending to assist her infirm parent, a tall dignified-looking young woman, with a profusion of the finest dark brown hair, large soft eyes, to which the hue of the soundest and glossiest ha-

zel nut in the world must have furnished the counterpart, and a skin which a mercer alone would have dreamed of comparing to either velvet or satin, but for which an admirer of nature would seek a similitude in the delicate transparent texture of certain flowers ; the camellia japonica, for example, when first expanding under the fostering canopy of its own broad, shining, glossy leaves ! Her mouth was not remarkable for beauty, but a dimple hard by compensated for its slight irregularity ; and the dignity of the whole contour of the face was charmingly relieved by the archness of expression which always more or less resides in not exactly a *petit nez retroussé*, (like her mother's or Cleopatra's of old) but a slight inclination upwards of the point of a long handsome nose.

I resisted of course all attempts to dispossess the captain of his privileged chair, and it was in replacing him in it with gentle violence that my eye first encountered Miss Clitheroe's. She coloured slightly, and as soon as her father was seated, held out her hand to me with engaging frankness, and congratulated me on my recovery. I said, with rather more of sincerity than usually attends such protestations, that I considered myself indebted to

an accident which had procured me such agreeable acquaintance, and such rare kindness ; and in spite of the good captain's benevolent shake of the head, and Mrs. Clitheroe's good-humoured "*Fi-donc ! flatteur !*" I saw nothing particularly incredulous in the air of Pauline.

During those days of listless, yet not unpleasing languor with which smart fever, from whatever cause, is usually succeeded, I felt too completely, for the first time, the luxury of a domestic circle, to meditate tearing myself from it, or even disturbing the placid tenor of my present enjoyment by an avowal of my name. I had been made too well aware by the hint that escaped Mrs. Clitheroe on the road, of the idle, if not profligate light in which I had been represented to her ; and I would sooner have consented to risk again all the bones in my body, than a premature disclosure of my identity with the despised, if not hated, "*Mauvais sujet*" of a rival, thus spoken of by the mother of Pauline. How the discovery indeed was ever to be made, sometimes puzzled me. In cold blood and in person, it certainly could not ; nor at all, until self-love should detect a certain degree at least of interest in the bosom of Pauline.

This her manners, however, would render it more than ordinarily difficult to ascertain ; for, while much of her mother's openness, tempered by more feminine reserve, characterised them, she inherited from her father a gentle dignity and evenness of temper, which, always delightful, was not easily subject to those fluctuations by which the internal current of the feelings may be traced. She passed so naturally and gracefully from her first flush of gratitude, and emotion in expressing it, to a more subdued tone of sisterly frankness and good-will, that I could hardly quarrel with a state of things so pleasing. But I had read the sparkle and the flutter of anticipated conquest in some bright eyes ; and here victory seemed as unconscious as unsought.

The admirable order of the little household—limited as were its means, and heterogeneous its materials—excited my warmest admiration ; and not the less, that its main-spring and presiding fairy was evidently Pauline. The Captain, a perfect gentleman of the old school, urbane, upright, and conciliatory—was peculiarly unfitted by habit as well as infirmity for the irksome accuracy of detail indispensable in a department, for the mere mecha-

nical details of which he easily found a deputy. Pauline's clear hand and clearer head supplied all deficiencies ; and the barrack accounts of Manchester would have defied the scrutiny of the hair-splitting Joseph Hume himself. Mrs. Clitheroe seemed denied by nature the faculty of managing, or even understanding money. It had been scarce in Canada, and scarcer in Europe, without in the least increasing her respect for it ; but Pauline—(and it must have been by instinct)—was a very adept in elegant but judicious economy, and was keeper of the family purse ; as I verily believe she was of its conscience—with such reverence of affection did her guileless parents look up to their gifted child.

All this was done quite unobtrusively—in the midst of girlish playfulness, and womanly gentleness, and a whole host of pretty feminine pursuits, which supplied in this charming girl the absence of accomplishments, vulgarly so called. Not that she lacked her share even of these—however irregularly and unscientifically acquired. She spoke French, as a matter of course, better than a whole host of boarding-school misses—warbled sweetly to the old guitar, which had formed her mother's chief wealth on leaving Canada—embroidered un-

der the tuition of Marie (who had learned herself in a convent in Montreal) like a very nun—and read aloud—as angels might be supposed to do, if the “poetry of heaven” the stars—were legible ! This formed the chief employment of our evenings, during my convalescence—as I had stipulated for the continuance of every family custom ; and truly, with the pale, subdued, but noble figure of the veteran in one corner, the ever-varying expression of Mrs. Clitheroe in another—and Pauline, her own fine countenance reflecting every emotion of the narrative—a painter, admitted to our readings, would have found them no ignoble study.

As soon, however, as the progress of my recovery permitted—I felt urged by a complication of motives, to remove from my present quarters into lodgings of my own. That of simply relieving a family not in affluence from a burdensome guest, might have sufficed to dictate the measure ; had not the peculiar delicacy of our relative position rendered it more imperative. But, strange to say ! I found a third and still more urgent motive in my growing predilection for Pauline. By removing from her father’s roof, while yet unable to travel, a pretext was at once afforded for a temporary resid-

ence in the town, without betraying my latent attachment ; while, had I remained (as frequently entreated to do) his guest till fit to pursue my journey—that period must, I felt but too acutely, be quite inadequate to establish such an interest as I wished to create, in his fair daughter's bosom.

I know not how to convey to another that indescribable shade of self-esteem, and self-possession, which, amid all the retiring gentleness and unaffected modesty of Pauline,—seemed to whisper that she would not “unwooed be won,”—no ! nor undeserved either ! I am certainly not the first by thousands, who has found in probable difficulty an irresistible stimulus ; but my sanguine character, and the dangerous facility with which all its wayward requisitions had hitherto been gratified, doubled the zest with which I anticipated a conquest, which I already felt, if achieved—would be due to my personal qualities, not my adventitious possessions—to time and perseverance, not vanity or ambition.

Had I not been at this time on peculiarly good terms with myself—I could not have failed to perceive that my progress in Pauline's good opinion was ere long of a retrograde character. As long as

I was in her eyes a young man, who, travelling on business, had met with an accident honourable to his humanity, whose consequences rendered him unable to prosecute either his journey or his avocations—she regarded me with a mixture of pity and interest abundantly gratifying, and exerted to amuse me all her uncommon conversational powers, with almost sisterly cordiality. But when day after day rolled by, when the young man's arm was evidently as serviceable as ever, while (his heart being as yet wholly out of the question) his head gave no tokens of a wish to be more actively or usefully employed—compassion of one kind gave place to compassion of another. I soon found it out—for Pauline was the very personification of sincerity.

One eventful day at length, when her mother being engaged in her father's sick-room—I had inflicted upon her during a whole long morning the penance of my tediousness (as is too much the case with idle young men, who revenge themselves for not being able to kill their own time by murdering that of their neighbours)—she said, smiling to cover a yawn—"how sadly tired you must be, Mr. Maberly, of this long *séjour* in a place like this! at a

distance from your own home and pursuits, and every thing that can interest and occupy you !”

There were times of my life, not many weeks before, when such a speech would have appeared to me but the usual well-contrived opening for an avowal of the motives which alone could render such exile tolerable. But I could no more imagine Pauline Clitheroe angling for a compliment or a declaration, than I could have found courage to make her one if I had. Determined to steer clear of this rock, I ran upon another ; and said with affected *nonchalance*—“ All places are pretty much alike to one who has neither home nor pursuits of any kind.”

“ Neither home nor pursuits !” echoed Pauline in undisguised amazement, but its tone softened by involuntary sympathy—“ how very unhappy you must be !”

“ Not particularly so, I assure you,” said I, half ashamed of my rash admission, half nettled at its compassionate reception—“ I do not exactly see why a young man of fortune should be unhappy, because he lives where he chooses, and does what he likes.”

“ And do you like to live anywhere, and do

nothing ?” asked Pauline, still in unfeigned astonishment. “ Not exactly,” answered I, a good deal staggered by her plain sense view of the subject—“ but the only house I have is a ruin, in a vile neighbourhood ; and what *can* a man do, who was brought up to no profession, but amuse himself and do as others do ?” *

“ You *are* amused then ?” said she, with one of her arch, yet subdued smiles, “ I should have doubted it on any other authority.” “ Only at times,” said I, surprised into sincerity by her uncommon manner ; “ there’s a terrible deal of dull work in human life. London is very well in spring, till it gets like an empty oven when the bread’s drawn. Brighton not amiss in summer, if bricklayers could build trees as well as houses ; the country pleasant enough in autumn, (though I don’t care much for shooting, and have given up fox-hunting,) but then the leaves come drop dropping off, and the rains come drop dropping on, and it’s altogether enough to make a man hang himself. Winter’s the devil to get over anywhere ; London’s impossible ; Bath’s a bore. I’ve often a great mind to try Edinburgh.

“ ’Tis a delightful place !” sighed Pauline, so

PROBATION.

softly, that I began to fear her heart was there. "Were you ever in Edinburgh?" asked I, in breathless haste. "I spent some time there," was her quiet laconic answer, "about five years ago."

"You were very gay, I suppose," said I, eagerly, "but no!" added I, laughing at my supposed absurdity, "you could not have been come out five years ago!" "Not exactly," said she, laughing also. "I was too young to be a companion for girls of seventeen, so I consoled myself with one of seventy. I assure you we were a very well-assorted couple."

"Seventy!" echoed I, now amazed in my turn, "was the old lady your grandmother, or grand-aunt?" "Neither, neither," answered Pauline, smiling—"only my dearest friend on earth, (next to my parents of course,) and the liveliest companion I ever met with, young or old. If you go to Edinburgh, I must introduce you to her; she is very fond of young people."

"'Tis not mutual," whispered I to myself. "I never saw a tolerable old person in my life." "I am sure you will like Edinburgh," continued Pauline, (unconscious of my mental heresy,) "there are so many resources for a well-informed young man,

such pleasant society, such interesting lectures. I remember a young American——”

“And that reminds me of an old American,” exclaimed I, rather abruptly, “in whom we are both rather more deeply interested. I am ashamed, Miss Clitheroe, to be indebted to a casual word for reminding me of a duty, long since demanded alike by candour and delicacy. - But you can value sincerity, as well as practise it, and will give me credit for owning, that fear of forfeiting kindness in every point of view so precious to me, made me thus long defer appearing before you in my true colours. Yet there is something romantic in our *rencontre*, which may perhaps atone for an involuntary imposition. Do you know of any competitor for the succession of the late Dr. Aspinall?”

“In our recent journey to D—— we were informed of one, a very formidable one—a Mr. Meredith” “alias—*Maberly* !” exclaimed I, as gaily as my real confusion would permit, “does his pardon run under both names?”

Pauline looked, as she well might, the picture of surprise at so theatrical a *denouement* to so common-place a conversation. But there was no anger with it—and feeling, like a Romish penitent, as if

one confession must necessarily involve another—I hastily availed myself of her silent astonishment to add—“Miss Clitheroe, do not, I beseech you, accuse, or even suspect me for a moment, of unworthy motives for concealing my name! It was on my tongue’s end the very day chance first made me an inmate under your roof. But that residence awakened feelings which made me anxious you should see me without prejudice; rather as an obliged guest, than an unlucky, and I am sure involuntary opponent. May I hope that my silence has so far succeeded in disarming hostile feelings, that others have had leisure to arise? May I flatter myself that Pauline Clitheroe can ever view in her ‘formidable competitor’ the humblest and most devoted of her slaves? If ever I rejoiced in the probable issue of my claims, it is now, when it removes all suspicion of interested motives in my present suit. All I already possess, I lay at your feet—and if the old miser’s hoards are ever added to it—the offering will only be the worthier.”

I paused—really astonished and affected by my own eloquence, in this unpremeditated declaration; had I foreseen it, I should have been commonplace and absurd.

Pauline's surprise had not abated ; it had only changed its object with my abrupt digression. It subsided ere I concluded into somewhat of her usual serene composure. But her voice faltered, and a blush had come and gone more than once, ere she replied—" Mr. Maberly—(for by that name I must ever gratefully remember my preserver) I feel thankful to you for affording me the opportunity of declining, under another and less agreeable title, your flattering proposal. Worlds—were they your's to bestow—would not, in his present state of infirmity, tempt me to quit my father—nor could they (excuse my frankness) blind me to the disparity in our habits and pursuits, which render us mutually unsuitable to each other. You will ever have my best wishes for blessings more inestimable far than wealth. If that shall be your portion, may it be taught to purchase happiness !"

Before I could muster entreaties she was gone—the small size of the room rendering retreat the matter of an instant.

CHAPTER VI.

Hail ! sober state which all the world condemn,
The dread of women, and the jest of men !
Be mine the task to vindicate thy fame
And wrest from obloquy thy injur'd name.

Mrs. H. ERSKINE.

THIS disappointment, the severest if not the first I had ever in life experienced—cost me a three days fit of real illness, the offspring of mingled sorrow and resentment, on a frame not yet equal to such violent emotions. My non-appearance in ——— Street brought the good Mrs. Clitheroe to inquire for me. She found me looking ill of course, for I had slept little and ate less ; and prescribed her own favourite specific, a walk into the country. Whether this was dictated by good natured anxiety for my health, or a wish to hear

my confession, matters little—it was soon poured into her maternal ear.

“*Ah fripon !*” exclaimed she, shaking her head, though her smile of playful reproach soon gave place to seriousness—“little did we think that a wolf in sheep’s clothing lurked under our roof! and to meditate running away with our lamb too ! “*Mais c’est une vraie aventure de Roman !*” Seeing me look very blank at this cavalier notice of my proposal—she pressed the arm on which her’s rested, and said with affectionate earnestness—*Voyez ! mon cher Maberly—(a vilain Meredith ne te sied pas)*—Pauline has been used to consider you—erroneously I doubt not—as an idler, a *dissipateur*, one in short not calculated to make one of her steady character happy. *C’est dommage ! vraiment !* and her father and I have done all we can to change her opinion ; not if you will believe me, that we value your present superiority of fortune over our child ; but, because with me, if the heart is right, (as I think yours is), a trifle more or less ballast in the head goes for little. I never thought of asking whether *le papa* was a Solomon, any more than a Cræsus—I only saw he was young and handsome, fought bravely and danced

à ravir. But Pauline is wiser, and has learned to think not only for herself but others; and we have too often seen her in the right, to dispute it now. But time, *mon ami*! time and perseverance may do wonders for one so young and *aimable* as you—and one who has gratitude to plead for him, and not a soul likely to interfere. Pauline has lived too retired, and been too poor hitherto to have many *soupirans*—and those who may come on the strength of the legacy are little likely to find favour in her eyes. But *à propos* of favour—there is one more powerful than father or mother—nay even than the whispers of her own heart—to plead your cause with Pauline, provided you can gain her good will; and that is the old lady in Edinburgh with whom she spent two years when we were at Gibraltar, and to whom she owes much of her premature *sagesse*. Get Mrs. Sydney Hume on your side, *mon ami*, and you are almost sure of success. Pauline half worships the ground the good lady treads on, and no wonder—for she is one of the first of women. Her darling brother was Clitheroe's early friend—and when our girl was likely to be left among strangers, she took her to her home and heart, and made her what she is.

I'll give you a letter to her if you should go to Edinburgh, and, as I said before, gain her heart, and Pauline is *à vous* !"

My late ill success in gaining a young heart was not very encouraging to designs upon an older and more obdurate one—nor did I cordially subscribe to a panegyric on a damsel of seventy. But a chance, however remote, of Pauline, was worth a journey to the Pole ; and as the suggestion of Edinburgh and study had originated with herself, I felt in executing it the double satisfaction of paying her a compliment, and improving my own lost time. To pass a winter amid the intellectual society and pursuits to which she so fondly adverted, could not but be beneficial ; and as Saul resorted in his need to the witch of Endor, I made up my mind to invoke the powerful ministry of the ancient Scottish Sibyl.

I bade an almost filial adieu to Mrs. Clitheroe, in whom I left behind, I was glad to perceive, no lukewarm advocate, and availing myself of her daughter's concerted absence to extend my farewell to the good Captain, (whose mild eye spoke volumes of regret at the parting) I set out on my wanderings like Adam from paradise, but, alas !

more like the hero of Young's witty Epigram—leaving my Eve behind !

There was something in the aspect of the metropolis of the north, which conquered even the feeling of “ hope deferred,” if not annihilated, in my bosom. It was so unlike London, and Manchester, and Cheltenham, and every place with which I was familiar—its boasted prototype Bath not excepted, that it did my very heart good.

I looked for a day or two admiringly on its rows of stately stone houses, whose very uniformity was at first imposing, but have since gazed for weeks and months unsated on the picturesque confusion of its more antique portions—its poetical-looking fortress, the very *beau idéal* of a castle of romance, and its venerable palace standing like a grisly spectre of royalty deceased, its turrets still gory with the blood of Rizzio, and ringing with the shrieks of his insulted mistress. It is impossible to express how extraordinary it seemed to me to be in actual contact with objects such as these ; to see rising from the heart of a populous city a strong hold of the olden time, with grey bulwarks scarce distinguishable from the rocks amid which they were perched—the cradle and prison of monarchs,

the object of sieges and stratagems, long ere degenerate man had pressed the elements into aid of his natural means of defence !

And then the *site* of all this combination of styles and centuries ! the frame-work of this picture of past and present magnificence ! To those who have seen the hills, the rocks, and the estuary which make Edinburgh like no other place in the world—the bare mention of its name is like reading “ Price on the Picturesque,” and to those who have not, all his eloquence would fail in conveying an adequate idea. To me, be it always remembered, who had lived in sight of nothing more ancient than Temple Bar, or more romantic than Hyde Park, or more Alpine than the distant Malvern hills ; the northern metropolis and her scenery had all the advantages of contrast, if not of comparison. I rambled and gazed in undiminished admiration for that limited period during which mere rambling and gazing on any thing can satisfy a social being ; and then yawned and sighed in all the discomfort and *ennui* of a solitary one.

And solitary indeed must the hapless mortal feel, whose lot it is to perambulate, when its very lawyer population has deserted them, the at no time

redundantly peopled streets of Edinburgh ; when some dingy Doctor's carriage, creeping along as if half ashamed of its insignificance, shows, like a crawling emmet on the stately avenue of George street ; while dusty windows, closed shutters, and painters' scaffoldings, form the chief features on both sides of its interminable vista.

It was with the usual feelings of mingled shyness, involuntary awe, and yet affected contempt, with which superficially educated young men regard elderly single ladies, that I at length worked myself up to deliver my letter of introduction to Mrs. Sydney Hume. Had she not been the chosen friend and influential adviser of one whom through her means alone I thought it might yet be possible to soften, I should certainly never have sought the acquaintance at all, and my doing so was in itself no small proof of devoted attachment.

My ideas of elderly maidens, it must be remembered, were almost entirely formed on the specimens to whom my frequentation of watering-places had introduced me, with whose juvenile airs or superannuated follies I was naturally disgusted. Of the thousand amiable single women who soothe and dignify the abodes of retirement, or grace the privi-

leged walks of truly good society, I had not even an idea. I knew nothing, sad to relate ! either of home or society. I had lodgings, and I went to large parties ; I spent the mornings at billiard-rooms, coffee-houses, and clubs ; the evenings at theatres, balls, or bachelor dinners. Where was I to have found the *beau ideal* of an old maid ? As I walked along X—— street, I figured to myself the piece of antiquated formality I was about to encounter,—tall, starched and forbidding, like Tabitha Bramble herself, or like a picture of a certain aunt Tabitha, or something else of the kind, which I remembered staring me in the face in Fenchurch Street, when, as frequently happened, I was put in the corner for being naughty, and the eyes of which always seemed directed with a reproving glance on the little culprit. Besides amiable and delightful as I thought Pauline, I could not help attributing what appeared to me the slight tinge of prudery and pedantry in her character, to the lessons of this ancient damsel, so that a little resentment was added to the shyness, fear, and ridicule before enumerated.

Good heavens ! when I look back to the feelings with which I touched the knocker of a door, whose

threshold I have never since trod without reverential and almost filial affection, I cannot help doubting my own identity, and fancying I was then a changeling, under an influence darker and more degrading than that of the fairies.

I was let in by a respectable aged domestic, who, throwing open the door of a snug cheerful parlour profusely adorned with family pictures, and placing a chair for me with cordial old-fashioned civility, hastened to apprise his mistress of my visit. I had leisure, ere she arrived, to cast a glance around the apartment, unlike, in its mingled comfort and elegance, any with which I was familiar. On the hearth reposed, to my surprise, neither dog nor cat ; no parrot or other bird claimed the noisy privilege of a pet to disturb the quiet fireside. Books, of that unpretending aspect which bespoke them there for use, not show, loaded the tables. The place of honour, though not of ostentation, was assigned to a Bible and Common Prayer, of that venerable antiquity which never fails to command involuntary respect. Next to them, the best bound and best thumbed volume was a Shakspeare, the small print of whose close double columns spoke well for the eyesight of its aged mistress. English divines, sub-

stantial and orthodox, reposed in contact with playful French memoir-writers, and poets read for enjoyment, not quotation. A copy of Dryden's Fables, (which opened of itself at the "Flower and Leaf,") bore especially this privileged character.

Politics and history lay side by side, as if accustomed to reflect light on each other. "La Fontaine's Fables" had their *naïveté* and simplicity finely relieved by the gravity and sententiousness of a huge "Telemaque," adorned with sprawling cuts of the true French school; while, last not least, the airy volumes of the delightful "Sévigné" might have found a counterpart in the unfinished letters lying on a little writing table; evidently the prolific parent of a voluminous correspondence, and whose file of papers would have done honour to a secretary of state. It was distinguished, however, from vulgar *escritaires* by the presence of such a delicately enamelled gold snuff-box, as could only administer its enlivening incense to female brain—while a bag for knitting completed the keeping of this picture, whose Gerard Dow like minuteness, it is needless to add, was not the fruit of one hasty moment of idle impatience, but of long and familiar subsequent acquaintance. The conclusions I

then drew from the survey are only worthy of recall for the purpose of self-abasement. I gathered from a supercilious glance at the *tout ensemble*, that Mrs. Sydney was a bigot and a pedant—wrote long prosy letters—and took snuff!

The door was at length slowly and deliberately opened, and admitted—instead of the tall slender pinched-looking personage, such as Hogarth has pictured going to church in a winter morning, with a starved foot-boy behind her—a lady of a benign and motherly aspect, whom want of height could not rob of dignity, though it was tempered with a benevolence and cordiality quite calculated to put a stranger at once at his ease. But as a stranger she evidently did not intend to regard me. She walked up with an air of the most winning frankness, and with the loveliest smile that ever graced the lip of age, held out her hand to me.

I was so struck by her serene and benevolent aspect, and the maternal kindness of her reception, that I could almost have revived the fashion of her day, and kissed the hand I held, I believe, a moment longer than courtesy demanded. I looked I am sure with more than civil earnestness in her face, and with more than ordinary admiration on

the beautiful curls of the finest *ivory* (not silver) white, which were ranged in an order younger locks might have studied with advantage—round her open commanding brow; under a cap whose mingled taste and simplicity rendered it the meekest covering ever ancient lady's head was crowned withal.

The upper part of the face beneath it—the lofty brow, and a nose which must in youth have been somewhat too strong for feminine beauty—spoke an intellect of no common order—and certainly inspired, when vice or folly came athwart her path, a good deal of uncomfortable awe. But the large mild blue eye—the most intelligent I ever remember seeing of so peculiarly light a shade—and a mouth around which smiles of good humour and genuine enjoyment, usually mantled—softened the manlier conformation of the other features; and, joined to the pale though not sickly hue of the once delicately fair skin—gave altogether an aspect at once feminine and interesting to Mrs. Sidney Hume.

“Mr. Meredith,” said my new friend with an air of half-reproachful pleasantry, on glancing over her letter, and observing its date; “had I been

thirty years younger, I presume I should have had some thirty days sooner the pleasure of making your acquaintance ! But better late than never. A friend of Captain Clitheroe's must be welcome to me at any time—and that you are such in the most literal sense which gratitude can give the expression—Mrs. Clitheroe has long ere this apprised me. And now, how do you manage to kill time in this most rural metropolis ? where many a stranger gets his joke at the grass that grows in its summer streets ? No great wonder, you'll say, in the eyes of one like myself, who recollects them green meadows, where a lady could not walk unattended from their solitary character ! You are prepared, I hope, to say you admire Edinburgh—*cela va sans dire*—but honestly, you must be very tired of it at this deserted season ?”

I was quite unprepared for this playful familiarity—but betrayed by it out of all my shyness and distrust, I owned that for the first few weeks, the town and environs had afforded unmingled gratification ; but that I was now quite at a loss how to get over the interval still to elapse ere my university studies should commence.

“ I could preach, Mr. Meredith,” said the good

lady, with an arch smile, “ and hint that these are choice quiet times for private preparatory studies. But I never could study in fine weather myself either at sixteen or sixty ; and if you have no objection to a leaf from the book called Nature, I can enlist you among her pupils in a quarter where her lectures will neither be dry nor unedifying. I am about to take my usual flight to the country to visit friends whose house and all they have is mine—not in the hollow Persian, but honest English sense of the expression. My friends are necessarily theirs—and though I should perhaps be premature in giving that title to Mr. Meredith, yet he is, as the friend of my friends, on the high road to it.—Indeed you will think I have already forgotten the shortness of our acquaintance, if I add—what say you to an elopement with a charming creature of threescore and ten ?”

Had any one told me half an hour before, that I would have actually jumped at such a proposal, I should have been tempted to knock him down ; and yet, next to an expedition of the same kind with Pauline herself, nothing could have been more acceptable to me than this frank old-fashioned proceeding—one too which it was impossible to ascribe

to any other motive than a friendly desire to study, on the partial representations of good Mrs. Clitheroe, the character of her daughter's rejected suitor, and to give it, should the investigation prove favourable, the benefit of her potent mediation.

I was replying, however, with some natural scruples about intruding, when Mrs. Sydney good-humouredly stopped me. "I'll answer for your welcome," said she, "but you shall not answer for your satisfaction till you have made the experiment. A quiet country house is, I fancy, a new scene to you, Mr. Meredith; a Scottish one at all events must be so. You will see a good relic of primitive manners in the part of the world I am bound for.—But do not let me mistake complaisance for inclination; you have perhaps some other object in view."

I assured her with great truth, that I was entirely at her service, and could with equal veracity have added, that the *piquant* novelty of thus seeing the gay Ned Meredith installed body squire to a maiden lady of seventy, was more exciting to my jaded feelings than any of the stale devices of the turf or pump-room.

"It is as well," exclaimed Mrs. Sydney in good-

humoured triumph, “ that my recruit was fairly in-listed before my trusty ally John Newborough came to dispute my victory with his array of bottles yonder ! My old Malmsey might otherwise have run off with all the credit from my eloquence ; but now you may drink to our *bon voyage* without suspicion. So saying, she filled a glass of curious antique form, whose tall slender stalk, supporting a marvellously small vehicle for liquor, bore (like other “ tall bullies” on record) a probably fallacious testimony to the sobriety of our ancestors. I am certainly no admirer of sweet wines, but I should as soon have dreamed of declining the *elixir vitæ*, as the cordial offered by the friendly hand of Mrs. Sydney. I yet lingered with the empty glass in mine, when my singular and good-humoured hostess said, (pointing to the writing-table,) Mr. Meredith, the post is the most inexorable of Time’s deputies ; and while a young woman might perhaps only look grave, and fidget, an old one may take upon her to say, “ good morning” to you ; but on one condition, that you return to dinner if disengaged, or come the first day you are at liberty. There is much lee-way to make up in our acquaintance ; and knights-errant, before

setting out on an enterprise, always keep vigils and do penance; I'll promise not to starve you, and if you are *ennuyé*, it will be no more than Amadis and Tristram were before you, not to mention Don Quixote in the inn-yard of Montesinos."

I availed myself of her invitation for the morrow, at the primitive hour of four, and departed in love, yes! over head and ears in love with Mrs. Sydney Hume!

The circumstances of the dinner which followed will never, I believe, be erased from my memory—it was (like every thing else in Scotland) so unlike my previous anticipations. From experience of family dinners, and few and far between they were, in Fenchurch Street, I expected to find a maiden *symposium* (an *impromptu* one especially) chiefly compounded of maiden cronies, not one of whom it was in the range of possibilities, could equal or even resemble that *rara avis* Mrs. Sydney Hume.

But when I arrived—punctual perhaps from its very decided invasion of my usual habits—at the antediluvian hour specified—in the old lady's drawing-room—I found it already enlivened by three other guests, all of the male sex, and none of them in the least degree resembling the tame

pet protégés of a wealthy old spinster's *ménagerie*.

They were as remarkable for contrast as for anything else. The most striking, from figure and stature, was a tall fair man of gigantic proportions, and decided northern feature and complexion, who with a stentorian voice and manner, more distinguished for frankness than urbanity, shook me (without waiting for the formality of an introduction) heartily by the hand, and "hoped I found the air of the northern metropolis agree with my southern constitution."

"Don't believe him, my dear Mr. Meredith," said Mrs. Sydney playfully, "I'll introduce him at once, that you may see what a wolf in sheep's clothing is practising on your innocence! This is the renowned Dr. G——, who will desire no better than either to kill or cure you—as the chance may be—if you are complaisant enough to give him an opportunity. And this—said she, turning with respectful gravity towards a little placid-looking gentleman-like man in black, whose whole demeanour harmonized with his sacred profession—is my reverend pastor, and (as a stanch Anglican) no doubt your's also, while you remain

in this our land of Cakes and Presbytery. And here," added the old lady—turning in all the ease of privileged familiarity, and with a look of almost maternal pride and fondness to the third member of the groupe—"is a certain son of mine and of the Muses, who—while one of my friends there takes care of my soul, and the other of my body—caters for my imagination (which I assure you is as insatiable now as at fifteen) and for that of half the world besides—with a perpetual succession of mental banquets, for which this sublunary one of mine is, I must acknowledge, a very gross and unpoetical return. You are in luck, I can tell you, Mr. Meredith, to have to add to your recollections of Edinburgh, a *rencontre* such as this. I am, from long practice, a pretty successful angler for stray fish out of water in that slough of despond yclept Edinburgh in July—but it is not always that I succeed so gloriously—as I sit not *upon*, but under my rock there, (pointing playfully to the grey battlements of the Castle frowning in at the window) in bobbing for whale."

The person thus eulogized *con amore*, (and justly enough, heaven knows, and earth has since acknowledged,) looked, as a truly great man

usually does when praised—even by a friend—rather uncomfortable. He was too much used to it, however, even at that early period, to feel long disconcerted; and with a smile escaping from beneath his shaggy eyebrows and high o’erarching forehead, like the line of dazzling sunshine so often seen at sea just skirting the base of a beetling cliff,—told me I must make great allowance for the hyperbole common in hyperborean regions; as well as for the poetical imagination of Mrs. Sydney, who—he supposed I had yet to learn—had more genuine romance in her composition than all the troubadours and minstrels in Christendom.

“And he more fibs in his brain, my dear young friend,” replied she, shaking her head in mimic anger, “than all the *Fabliaux* writers and romancers on record, from the beautiful Sultana Scheherezade, who told stories nightly for her life, to the thousands who tell lies daily for their dinner!

“And here comes ours to stop further controversy. I’ll leave you, Mr. Meredith, to the mercy of the rival faculties of Divinity and Medicine. The Law I understand has got hold of you already, so, to save you from further peril, I’ll give

a retainer to my friend the advocate here (though a recreant one) to take my side in my approaching process of 'reduction and division' of the Q——hall kain hens. You'll tell him, Walter, in pity to his ignorance, as we walk into the next room, the meaning of that un-English, but I hope not 'unsavory' simile of mine. You, Jamie!—turning to the gaunt, but benignantly smiling physician—shall practise dissection on the S——shire pig—my young English friend (if his nerves will let him,) shall flesh his maiden sword in the haggis—and you, my dear Doctor, will say grace for us all. And now I am sure you'll say I have distributed my courtesies with the judgment if not the grace of the fair Perdita—whom, except in the article of killing my poor sheep instead of tending them—methinks I hugely resemble. You know the Tweeddale mutton of old, gentlemen—I hope it will keep up its character."

The dinner passed off as delightfully as might be anticipated from this its sportive prelude. Mrs. Sydney knew better than to draw *out* her pet Lion in the clumsy way which is sure to make a legitimate Lion draw *in* every thing about him, except perchance his claws. She accomplished her object

simply by turning the conversation to those subjects which were sure to interest him as well as to profit a young stranger like me, viz. the beauties and antiquities of Edinburgh—and on these his eloquence flowed copiously and unweariedly—now racy and high-flavoured as the old Scottish claret which formed the staple of our libations—at times emulating in delicacy and richness the *bouquet* of the solitary flask of imperial tokay (an imperial gift to a diplomatic relative) which formed the crowning nectar of the repast.

I think there must have been something in the very excess of my unsophisticated delight, on hearing for the first time, what Johnson himself would have allowed to be “first-rate talk,”—which acted as a passport to the sympathies of the master-spirit of the group. He pointed out, with condescending minuteness, the objects best worthy of an Englishman’s observation ; promised me introductions to some barristers idler than himself (if such might be found) when the season should reclaim them from their migrations ; and shook my hand at parting with a kindness, in which I read the extent of his filial devotion to Mrs. Sydney Hume.

The same paramount and reverential feeling

secured me a gruff but hearty tender of good offices more substantial than civility—(connected with my future studies)—from the giant son of Esculapius—while the mild and retiring—but it was easy to discover, accomplished divine—invited me with pastoral earnestness to his pew at church, and with evident sincerity to his board after service. “We are a little flock here,” said he, “in a strange though friendly land; and have much need to make a stray brother from the south welcome, when curiosity, or a better motive, as I understand your’s to be, brings him among us.”

When the distinguished trio were gone—Mrs. Sydney congratulated me on the acquisition of three such valuable acquaintance. “These are all men, my dear Mr. Meredith, *comme il y en a peu* (as our neighbours across the water phrase it.) One of them, I think we may say—*comme il y en a point*! and as I was one of the first to make the discovery, I venture to predict I shall live to see it acknowledged all over the world. Yonder rough diamond of a leech too, is not a Hercules in body only; his mind is of true Johnsonian caliber; and with somewhat of the London Leviathan’s snorting and blowing, in annihilation of pretenders, and scorn

of fools—I have heard him ‘sigh you as soft as any nightingale,’ when some interesting young creature had baffled all that mortal skill could devise to keep her from an early grave!

“As for my spiritual guide, he is the very *beau idéal* of a pastor for a flock (which he happens to be) of ladies and gentlemen; and that, let me tell you, is not such plain sailing as a quiet curacy of a country parish. The fence that will keep honest oxen quietly at their pasture, only tempts high-bred racers and hunters to try their metal. But that meek, mild-tempered man who has just gone out, keeps his fashionable troops in tight order, I can assure you; though his method is somewhat new. Vulgar orators, to be impressive, raise their voices; Dr. — drops his to an intonation so deep and solemn, that you may hear a pin drop in his chapel, and the hearts of all his aristocratic stray sheep beating audibly for very fear, under his mild rebuke. They know he is a Christian, a scholar, and a gentleman; and when these three ingredients are thoroughly combined, they make a *powerful preacher*—not in the conventicle, but common-sense meaning of the term.

“And now, my young friend, good night. I

start for the north the day after to-morrow ; and there's room enow in the chaise—I built large on purpose for such windfalls—to hold you and myself, and my mistress of the robes. It will not be so well packed as Mr. Gilpin's after all !”

CHAPTER VII.

Know'st thou the land of the mountain and flood,
Where the pine of the forest for ages has stood ?
Where the eagle comes forth on the wings of the storm,
And her young ones are rock'd on the high Cairngorm ?

MRS. ELLIOT.

PUNCTUAL as a lover, at the hour appointed I was in X—— Street, from whose utmost and solitary length I could discern the travelling vehicle of my delightful new friend, looming through the town haze of a July morning, like a stranded vessel on some desert shore.

The array of trunks and bandboxes which the pavement before the door displayed, was certainly somewhat appalling to one little versed in the mysteries of the female toilet. But I was as yet ignorant of the practised dexterity of Alice Pinnock,

a demure staid middle-aged Abigail, and that of Archy M'Gillivray, a Highland porter, whose peculiar merits as a squire of Dames had recommended him to Mrs. Sydney's powerful patronage. Under these potent enchanters, pile after pile disappeared into the cavernous recesses of the roomy vehicle ; and, finally, not more than half a dozen packages of moderate bulk remained, to divide with the three inside passengers its ample interior.

When I found myself fairly perched up between mistress and maid, on a voyage of knight-errantry, I knew not very well whither, I could not help smiling at the novelty of my situation, which, however, I should have been very sorry at that moment to exchange for any other. "Come now, confess," said Mrs. Sydney, who always conversed with people's looks quite as fluently as with their words, "You never were thus entrapped between two ancient maidens before ! you put me in mind exactly of a poor wildelephant, fresh from his native haunts, and placed *hors de combat* between two treacherous tame decoys ! There is this difference, however, that you are going to the forest and not from it, and that emancipation, not bondage, is the object of your

capture. I am thankful to see you take it so quietly, else, heaven help Alice's brittle gear of band-boxes and medicine bottles !”

To arrive at our destination, we were to cross, some miles higher up the river, the noble estuary on which Edinburgh is situated, and after a drive of surpassing beauty, we found ourselves seated on the deck of the ferry-boat, at liberty to enjoy the delicious weather and beautiful scenery, on both sides of the here narrow Frith, at full leisure ; as the period of which I am writing preceded the use of steam to accelerate navigation, and a dead calm (more agreeable to the maiden fears of Mrs. Sydney than to my youthful impatience,) protracted our passage to twice its average length.

The delay was amply compensated by the lively converse of my companion, and her intelligent manner of pointing out to my attention the respective beauties of the rival seats of the houses of Roseberry and Moray on either bank of the river. “ This is what may be called Scotland in her gala dress,” said she, with a patriotic smile. “ Like other rustic belles, she is not the worse for a little ornament ; but I flatter myself you will see much to admire, even in her wild-wood garb, where you are going.”

This sort of conversation, agreeably sprinkled with characteristic anecdotes connected with the mansions in sight, sustained occasional interruptions, of which the kindly feelings of Mrs. Sydney made her more than tolerant, from the incursions of a lovely child of about seven years old, across the imaginary line which divided the patrician and plebeian passengers, into our privileged vicinity.

These irruptions, at first occasioned by mere childish activity and impatience of restraint, were by degrees imboldened by the benign smiles of my companion, and still more by the contents of a beautiful *bonbonnière*, with which she tempted the stray urchin nearer and nearer to her side. I never saw a lovelier picture of age and childhood than was presented by the good old lady and the beautiful boy, when the time-bleached locks of the one came almost in contact, as she fondly stooped over him, with the rich fair curls of the other, whose little tartan bonnet had been thrown off in the eager delight with which the sight of the precious box inspired him.

It was not merely its sugary treasures, however acceptable, by which his infant attention was, on closer contact, rivetted; it was a portrait which the

lid displayed of a young Highlander of noble family, in the full costume of his country. The child's first exclamation on recognising the kilt was, "My daddie !" but on a second glance at the youthful figure, his countenance fell, and he said sorrowfully, "Na, it's only Hugh Macalpine."

"It is generally taken for a greater man," said the owner, smiling at the mistake ; "nine people in ten insist on its being Prince Charlie, but I daresay it is quite as like Hugh Macalpine. Pray, who is he, my little man ?"

"Our fifer," said the child, in astonishment at the question, "my mother's cousin from Rannoch, that brought home daddie's Bible and his sporran. He's very good to wee Johnny ; I wish he was here to carry me when I'm tired, and help granny to lead my mammy."

"Where do you come from, Johnny ?" asked I, much interested in his prattle. "Oh, a great great way off ; Dover, they call it, a nasty place ; it made mammy cry all day long." "She is a widow, I suppose," said I, more as an involuntary remark, than as addressing the child, or supposing he knew the import of the term. "Aye," said he quickly, "that's mammy's name now. Granny always says,

‘widow and fatherless’ in her prayers, and I know they’re about mammy and me.” “Do you remember your father, Johnny?” asked Mrs. Sydney, gently. “I remember his bonnet,” said the child, innocently, “and its big black feathers, for they used to frighten me, but I know better now. I remember himself too, I’m sure, for my mammy told me never to forget him or his last blessing on his boy. She cried when he went away, but it was nothing to the way she cried when he never came back. I remember that, for it happened since I was a big boy.

“There came ships one day, and every body went down to the pier to see them; and little boats came, and men with kilts on them, and black feathers plenty. I was not frightened at them, but very glad, and would hardly hold mammy’s apron as she bid me, I wanted so to go to them.

“Mammy shook terribly when the boats came near, and the people hurraed, but she stood behind some wood, where nobody saw or spoke to her, till all the bonnets and kilts went by. The band came out last, and she no sooner saw Hugh Macalpine, than she snatched me up off the ground, and ran up to him and said—‘Laddie! where’s my De-

naid ?' Hugh grew very white—whiter than that picture, and said, 'Helen ! did no one write you ? he is with God !'

“Mammy let me go, and Hugh Macalpine held her up with one hand, and me with the other, till women came and carried her home. She never cried that day nor the next, nor spoke, but sat quite still, and I was very frightened, till Hugh came to see us, and brought daddie's Bible that was in his knapsack, and his sporran that had fine yellow shillings in it, which he said were for mammy. I wanted to play with them, for they were very pretty, but mammy snatched them from me, and cried, 'Laddie ! will you play with the price of your father's blood ?' But Hugh was sorry, and said, 'No, Helen ! your Donald's blood bought nothing but honour'—so she let me have them again, and read in daddie's Bible till she gave up crying.”

I saw Mrs. Sydney's lip quiver, and her mild eye fill, as the child finished his artless tale. Partly to conceal her emotion, she rose hastily, and taking him by the hand, stepped over the plebeian quarter of the vessel where sat his mother and grandmother, the former reclining in death-like

exhaustion against a cushion formed of her old parent's tartan plaid—the latter supporting and gazing on her apparently dying child, with all a mother's grief, and a Christian's resignation.

She rose to receive the boy from the hand of the stranger lady ; and such was the commanding effect of her stately presence in this unwonted quarter, that half the rude Highland reapers, of whom the crew chiefly consisted, did the same. Mrs. Sydney kindly beckoned them all to sit down, and doing so herself, by the side of the poor slumbering patient, began to question her mother as to her disease. “ She has nae complaint, my leddy,” answered the sorrowful, yet firm-minded old woman, “ nane that man can find out or cure. Its just a broken heart that is takin’ her awa’ to her husband, and though she’s the last o’ seven, I wad be sweer to grudge her to her Maker and her Donald ! They were the bonniest couple ever my een looked on, when they came thegither—ye see what’s she’s now since it pleased the Lord to part them.”

“ Where have you come from ?” asked Mrs. Sydney, much interested—“ I thought the child said from the south of England.” “ Even sae !

my leddy," answered Highland Tibbie (as this maternal heroine was called by the many whom her tale had moved to pity and admiration.) " I was sitting—dowie eneugh, gude kens, at my lanely fireside in Rannoch, when a shadow came suddenly across the light from the hallan, and I kent there was ill news to be dreed by me or mine. It was the worthy minister come (and weel I kent it afore he fand breath to say the word) to tell me puir Donald was a corpse in a foreign land, and Helen a lone widow in ane that was little better to a puir Highland lassie. He spak mony beautiful words to me, though I canna rightly say that I heard ony o' them at the time, but I've minded them a' since as though they had been atween the brods o' the Bible. He promised to write to the Cornel o' the regiment to get Helen sent cannily down wi' her boy; but he owned, frae what Hugh Macalpine had written to his granny—he doubted she was na fit to undertake the journey.

" ' I'll gang to her !' said I, starting up wi' a sudden flaught o' boldness; ' what for sud na I gang to bring my bairn hame, if it be God's will, or to wait on her dcath-bed, if she's to lay her banes wi' the southron !' The minister thought

it a rash plan, but it's ill fechtin' wi' a mither wi' but ae bairn left in this world, and that ane boun' for anither ! It was borne in on my mind that gangè I must, if I wad see my bairn in life—and when the honest man saw it he said nae mair. He offered me siller to pay my expenses ; and when he saw me sweer to tak' it, he said gently, ' Tibbie ! ye maunna be so pridefu' ! Would ye let your bairn want a meal in life, or' (and here the long suppressed tears burst forth) ' à coffin when a's dune, because your Highland blood winna let ye stoop to an alms ? But its no an alms, if that will content ye—It's a loan, frae ae travailing sorrowing Christian to anither ; and if ye dinna pay me, the Lord will.' ”

“ And did you go alone to Dover, Tibbie ? ” said Mrs. Sydney, looking with surprise on the simple figure of the primitive old woman. “ I did e'en sae, my leddy,” was the answer : “ the minister gae me a pass to let a' gude Christians ken my errand, in case o' my being in ony strait, and I just stappit doucely on my road, whiles walkin' whiles ridin', just as it fell in my way ; but I should say that I wan in a Perth sloop sae far to Newcastle. Oh ! but I thought little o'

England, when I first landed among yon black coal heughs, and reekin' steam engines ; but I kent better afore a' was dune, and had cause to think muckle baith o' it and its folk, although it has nae hills and lochs and bonnie rinnin waters like Perthshire. Ae way or anither, I scarce ken how, I made out Dover, and the first sight o' Helen—though a sair sight it was—made up for a' ! She was sair changed, and seeing me brought Donald and her marriage a' back before her ; but she spunkit up after a while, and said she wad try to won hame to Rannoch. I saw she wasna fit for't, but I was as little fit to hinder her, and I thought in my simplicity, wha kens but the Highland air, and the goats' whey, and the sight o' her ain heathery braes, may set my puir bairn upon her feet again ?

“ But if she was to try it, it could na be by land as I had done. The Cornel, honest man, wad hae paid a coach ticket for her to Edinburgh wi' right gude will, but ridin' was a fatigue she couldna endure. So he took anither plan, and got us to the sea-side, and put on board a veshel for Leith ; and though our voyage has been long and tedious, and Helen aye the langer the weaker,

still we're wearing hame at last ; and lie whar she may now, it'll no be in a fremit kirk-yard ! I care na whither it be at Rannoch, (unless it be for the gude minister's sake that gae her her name, and wad lay her head doucely in the mools,) for she has nane there to lie near. My Allan himsel' was lost in a speat o' Tummel, and never heard o' mair, and my six buirdly sons are a' lying in foreign lands far enuch frae the braes o' Rannoch. So I'll gang wi' my ae bairn, till she can gang nae farther—and wharever she lays her down to die, sae will her mither—for her grave 'll be a' that's left me in this warld o' sin and sorrow !”

“ Would you like to try Glen Falconar ?” said Mrs. Sydney compassionately, and the bonny braes of ———, so like your own at Rannoch ? There will be a bieu house over your head for your joint lives, and a skilful doctor to attend poor Helen, and a minister as kind and as feeling as your own to converse with her, and schooling for the laddie, and friends to look after him when ye are both gone. If this, and hills, and woods, and waters as like your own well known ones as ever one heather-bell grew to another—can make up to you for the home of your youth, Tibbic—I can promise

them all ; and you shall have a cart to go at your own pace and time all the way to your new dwelling. You'll find me there before you, and every thing in order."

"Are ye no garrin me trew, my leddy?" said the bewildered Tibbie, "as the misleart callants whiles did up bye in England? But ye wadna do sae to an auld helpless aefauld body, that believes a' folk to be gude because she has found sae mony! Will I no gae whar the like o' you says there's sae muckle gude waitin' me and mine? The Lord requite ye for it mair than I can do! But I canna say I'll think it like Rannoch, na na! I can never see days there like them that made Rannoch like the garden o' Eden to me! but ony place will do to die in, and I'll hae Helen's grave to mak it bonny to me ere long."

It was not till John Newborough and Alice—whom long practice had made expert in the ways of benevolence—had arranged every thing for the comfort of the poor invalid, and her easy transport to Glen Falconar, that Mrs. Sydney would think of her own departure. While her carriage was disembarking, we spoke to the interesting patient, who, to gentleness above her situation,

added evidently a pious and grateful heart. It was pleasant to learn, (in the mother's momentary absence,) that the plan proposed was a real relief to her daughter's wounded spirit. "I would hae gone wi' her to Rannoch," said the exhausted mourner, "if it pleased God to enable me, because I thought it my duty ; but sure I am, the first sight o' the place would hae been my last. There's no a baulk in the field, or a stane in the burn, but Donald and me hae played on thegither. There's his stool ayont the hallan, and his seat in the kirk, and his shielin on the hill—there's every thing yonder but his grave ; and as ye canna give me that— a' the warld's alike to Helen !"

I had been no uninterested listener to a conversation, which, however, it may be believed, I could not thus have detailed, had I not since heard it often repeated by the animated lips of Mrs. Sydney herself. At the time, much of its poetry and pathos was no doubt locked up from me in its native Doric ; but I felt, as has since been the case with the thousand English readers of Sir Walter's *Scottish dialogues*—that it was the language of nature and feeling, though some individual expressions might baffle an unpractised southern ear.

Nor had I lived altogether for nothing some weeks in Lancashire, though its dialect bears to that of Scotland—and of the Highlanders especially—about the same resemblance, as a Travestie of Virgil does to the majesty and sweetness of the Georgics.

The incident gave rise to many pleasing anecdotes, which confirmed this opinion, and extended it (however reluctantly) to the features of character, as well as language, in the peasantry of the two countries. “ You would think me a sad prejudiced mortal, Mr. Meredith, and more clannish than even Tibbie herself—were I to tell you a thousandth part of the good I know of my own poor but praiseworthy countrymen. Their attachment to their heath-clad hills—their heroic devotion to an unfortunate family, and subsequent loyalty to a more prosperous one—are qualities history takes note of ; but it is their honest sense of independence—their virtuous struggles with poverty—and their filial duty to the grey hairs of their parents—which make me love them in my heart’s core. Call them if you will selfish, cautious, old-mannered, (cold-hearted I defy you to call them) ; yet if selfishness lead, as it often does, to the power to serve, and

caution to hospitality, and cold manners cover hearts glowing with patriotism to their country, and good-will to all her sons—why should we quarrel with qualities so intrinsically useful, and the parents of others so praiseworthy ?

“ If you will show me a Scot who, on the plains of India, or the wilds of America, or—harder test by far—in the crowded marts of traffic and civilization, will shut his door and his heart to a brother of the north,—I’ll consent to excommunicate him from the clan he belies and dishonours. But he shall no more make me forswear my opinion of Scotsmen, than one sordid churl of an Englishman shall make me rob John Bull of his character for good-nature and liberality. But John’s liberality is not like that of Saunders. He never troubles his head who you may be, but gives you, without effort and without thinking twice of it, what it cost him no great pains to acquire. Saunders listens to hear if you have a Scots tongue in your head, and if he can detect in you the slightest inflection of his native accent, unlocks in your favour the heart and the “ *kist*” which are certainly not at every one’s service.

This of course is speaking very generally—as a

strong national feature. I don't mean to prefer particular to universal benevolence—I only mean to say it makes Scotsmen very delightful to each other. I have had large experience of its utility, as it often falls in my way to help young men out in the world. We have prosperous Scots, heaven bless the mark ! in every quarter of the globe. You have only to recommend to one of these a sturdy callant with a carrotty head and a Mac before his name, and, presto ! he is a made man !—taken to the very bosom as well as house of his exiled foster-father !

“ Then you heard and understood probably something of Tibbic's repugnance to accept parochial aid ; I am sure her expressive gesture at the word “ alms” might have conveyed its meaning. I wish I could say this was as universal as in my youth, when utter irremediable poverty, to the tenth degree of every one connected with her, could alone have subjected a grey-haired mother to such an indignity. But still I know hundreds and hundreds of hard-working Scottish labourers, who, with families of ten and twelve ragged urchins, (too poor to wear shoes, but not too poor to go to school), find still a corner of their hearth, and

the warmest corner too—for an aged parent ; to save whom from such a den of degradation as an English workhouse, they would toil till they sunk in the attempt. And many and many are the precious sums of hard-earned, blood-bought gold, which it has been my delighted office to gladden the dim eyes of parents with—from sons they might never hope again to see ; but whom their grey hairs haunted in the midnight watch and distant battle-field.

“ And their constancy in attachments, my dear young friend ! this I know you will appreciate, under the most unfavourable and trying circumstances. Would a young Scots ploughman, without a farthing in the world, to whom the bright prospect of matrimony is but a distant glimmering beacon to a well-nigh hopeless mariner—walk cheerfully after his hard day’s toil, perhaps some half-dozen miles, to his betrothed one’s dwelling, merely (and in nine cases out of ten all worse conclusions would be a libel) to talk over their future ménage, and indulge in the sober luxury of anticipation—were he not by nature the most faithful, as he is the most patient of mortals ? And would that constant creature—when transformed by years of use-

ful toil and quiet happiness into an aged white-haired grandsire—look as complacently on his time-worn helpmate, and on his flourishing offspring—or pray with such natural eloquence for them all, over the Bible that is seldom off his knee—had their courtship been the idle frolic of a wake or fair, or the tenor of their lives been wasted in the alehouse, and ended in the poor's-house?

“All this is dreadfully narrow-minded, and national,” said my old friend, taking breath, and smiling at her own enthusiasm; “but you are going where you may judge for yourself. I’ll give you a fact or two in the mean time. There are no alehouses, *scotticé* dram-shops, (I mean places for getting systematically drunk) in Glen Falconar, that I know of, but one, though no Highlander refuses or dislikes a glass of whisky; and the poor’s fund (for we have no rates) may amount to perhaps a dozen or fifteen pounds a-year, most of which, you’ll observe, is given in the shape of halfpence (by means of a ladle with which you’ll be amused), by the same horny labouring hands, which, when stiff and disabled by age or sickness, are to benefit by their past contributions. This is an excellent part of the business. The Sunday’s “*buwbee*” puts

every man, woman, and child that can muster one, in mind of the present distress of others, and their own possible future necessities ; and, after what is said in Scripture of the widow's mite, why should we doubt that this charity of the poor to the poor brings a blessing with it, and makes the simple treasury into which it is cast, like the widow's cruse, still adequate to its blessed end ? This is not all so now, Mr. Meredith, in our richer and more southern parishes. No wonder if I cling to people and things like those we are going among, who remind me of days, happier certainly, if not so brilliant, when all Scotland was poor, and unadorned, and unsophisticated, like Glen Falconar."

We were now gradually approaching that privileged spot. For the last few miles our road had been insensibly ascending ; and we had exchanged the soft smiling beauties of a valley, (which, but for the superb frame of mountains in which it was enchased, would have resembled England) for a wide glen or "strath," as Mrs. Sydney called it, of a different and more *piquant* character. The fields, it was true, had no longer the breath, nor the crops the luxuriance of those in the champaign country behind us ; but the want was richly compensated by

the prouder and prouder elevation of the mountain background, and the lovely fringe of natural wood, which marked with its verdant tracery the yet unseen course of the river that foamed through the fast narrowing glen.

It was on crossing a bridge of antique construction, lofty as the frequent winter-floods required, that I first enjoyed the full view of that new and striking object, a Scottish mountain-stream,—and felt half disposed to think Scottish blood must flow responsive in my veins, from the thrill of emotion I experienced as I gazed. I would not willingly depreciate the rivers of my native country, but methinks they pay the price of her superior fertility, in the tameness and sluggishness of their course ; and their silvery hue, when at its best and purest, wants the bewitching sparkle—the brilliant tint, borrowed as it were from the well-known topaz of the parent mountains, which makes a Highland stream, as it chafes over its rocky bed, the loveliest, (if indeed it may be so characterised), of inanimate objects.

The one in question might claim the palm of beauty from even its native rivals. Huge beds of rock, partially smoothed by the winter torrents into

level terraces, partly hollowed by the same powerful agency into gigantic cauldrons, were now, by the diminished expanse of the summer stream, exhibited in fantastic variety, while abundance of water remained to foam in a thousand rainbow hues over fairy waterfalls, and sleep in green and glassy brightness in unfathomable pools below. From every fissure and interstice in the rocky framework of the landscape, festoons of briar-roses mingled with the long tassels of the weeping birches that bent to kiss the stream. One solitary angler, seated on a projecting rock, alone enlivened, without disturbing, the matchless picture.

I sat beside Mrs. Sydney (who enjoyed my silence more than a thousand common-place exclamations,) speechless with delight. “I understand you,” whispered she, “and I see you understand *Nature*—that is enough!”

We journeyed on in this tacit interchange of sentiment, till the natural birch-groves became gradually intermingled with, and expanded into extensive plantations, of some fifty or sixty years’ growth; and the mountain-road—its natural inequalities scarcely alleviated—gave place to a more polished and more carefully-lined avenue, though

still far from exhibiting the trimness of a modern approach. The wild rose and heath-bell still formed its sole border—hazel and birch the only undergrowth, while the deep red stems of the lofty indigenous pines rose in rugged majesty above us.

“ We are still some miles from Glen Falconar,” said Mrs. Sydney, “ though on the estate, and entering, as you perceive, within the demesne. It is too large and too old a place, to be what is called *highly* kept. Neither Scots bounds nor Scots fortunes permit such dainty doings ; but we atone by inside comfort for absence of outside decoration.

“ Would you ‘insult nature with shaven lawns and trim parterres here ?’ ” said I, “ or rather *could* you ? ” as I gazed on each side of the carriage, upward on the right, through a deep forest glade in which a red deer was bounding past me, to the gigantic peak of Ben ——— ; and downward on the left, through a thickly tangled copse on the river, over which I half started to find we were actually suspended in mid air ; while, rising above the verdant screen that seemed to close up the head of this glen in front, mass upon mass of heath-clad mountains towered in the clear blue sky.

In the course of another half hour, a rustic gate admitted us into a lawn, or rather park, (for it would have been so styled in England,) of noble dimensions ; and the house of Glen Falconar, large, patriarchal-looking and unadorned, with additions of every century I believe since the return of the owner of the original rude tower from the battle of Flodden, came full in view.

“ There’s a place, the sight of which does my very heart good ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Sydney, “ and one, the inside and outside of which, I am proud to shew to a Southron ! You have finer houses far—and far be it from me to undervalue your noble mansions, and the noble hearts that own them ; but there is a hereditary singleness of heart and warmth of kindly feeling, which I have lived to trace through three generations of this ancient family—that comes more home, as I said before, to my Scottish prejudices. I have loved and honoured many in your fair land of the Oak and Rose ; but my dearest ties, and my fondest predilections, have flourished of course under the shadow of my native Pine and Thistle.

“ *A propos* of ‘ Pines ’—there stands the good old laird—for whom the stately Alpine monarch

forms no unappropriate simile—on his threshold to receive and welcome us ; and, (not un-à propos of Thistles) there stands beside him his sister Annie, my chum and crony from my youth up, who, with a little of the pungency of the national symbol, and spirit of the national motto about her—and one, *certes*, not to be meddled with incautiously by fools or small wits—has as much of the genuine milk of human kindness in her, after all, as that doughty Nimrod her brother ; who, with happy inconsistency, slays hares and salmon by the dozen, while he would step out of his way at any time to avoid hurting a fly !”

In another moment description gave place to demonstration. Mrs. Sydney was hugged in the cordial embrace of the fine old man ; and, (but for the opportune hint of the thistle,) I should infallibly, in my new-born enthusiasm for old maids—have rushed into the arms of aunt Annie :

CHAPTER VIII.

The captive bird from irksome durance freed,
The heart quick throbbing as in mirthful mood,
Cutting the liquid air with joyous speed,
Regains the covert of its native wood.

REV. J. MARRIOTT.

THE family at Glen Falconar consisted of the old gentleman, and his maiden sister already mentioned, and a charming little grandchild, the only daughter of his only son, a highly distinguished officer, then serving in the Peninsula. The mother of this little fairy creature, in whose smiles her grandfather literally lived, while beneath them aunt Annie's most caustic mood gave way, like frost-work before the sun, had died soon after giving her birth, in a foreign and hostile land ; and—so reckless is the courage that results from

despair—never was Major Falconar's white charger more conspicuous in the field, or his name more prominent in the gazette, than in the battle to which he was summoned from the death-bed of his wife, and the tearful baptism of his child. He had snatched an interval of comparative inaction to bring her home to the Glen, and ever since, she had been the joy and stay of its old inmates, and the solace of her father's one brief subsequent visit to his paternal mansion.

I was soon (probably from sharing her sports) a special favourite with Flora ; and this, joined to my previous favour with another lady of some ten times her age, was a sure passport to the hearts of both the laird and Miss Annie.

The former was the stately ruin of one of those majestic figures of the olden time, whom we certainly do not see growing up among their degenerate descendants to replace them. The men of our day—such I mean as deserve the name—are unexceptionable, as regards the purposes of youth and manhood ; but, even conceding the vast advantages of the statelier costume, and obsoletely dignified manners of their grandfathers—have they

thewes and sinews, and exterior proportions to stand before us half a century hence as commanding in decay? Old ladies, I devoutly hope, and see no reason to doubt, there will be among us, and delightful ones too, as long as society exists : but for the old gentlemen of the good—I may say the *grand* old school—I fear we may, even in our own times, live to look in vain.

Mr. Falconar, like almost every Scotchman of family of his standing, had served abroad, and studied tactics at an early age at a German military school. His erect figure bore testimony to an accuracy of drill worthy of the great Frederick ; while long habits of moral relaxation had worn off all the stiffness of the *ancien militaire*, and left only a touch of the polish behind. His long single-breasted coat, with a scarlet collar, though of no particular age or country, had about it a lingering regimental look, that savoured of his early profession ; and, with a sort of foraging-cap of foreign aspect, by which his grey locks were picturesquely, though partially covered, formed, with the sportsman-like negligence of his nether costume of large fishing boots for wading after salmon, or tough leather

leggings for scrambling among the heather in quest of grouse—a contrast not often to be met with in our day.

Next perhaps to the memory of his lost wife, and little Flora, and her absent father—the person he loved best in the world was Mrs. Sydney Hume. She was, and had always been to him, to all intents and purposes, a sister ; and as such she suited him better than Annie, of whom (a sure proof how little formidable really transcendent talents are) he was a good deal more afraid. Not but that Annie, as his playmate from childhood, and the faithful superintendent of his household, stood high in his esteem, and even affection ; but the laird was slow and deliberate—Annie quick and irritable—the laird disliked a joke at his own expense or any one's else ; and Annie, who must have her's, *coute qu'il coute*, had often no one but her brother to keep her wits in practice on. Then she always beat him at backgammon, at least nine times in ten—while, when Mrs. Sydney joined the party, it resolved itself into the delightful obsolete aristocratic game of *ombre*—and the good man fancied himself once more a gay gallant Lo-

thario, playing *semprendre* with the maids of honour at the Electoral Court of B——.

In deference to me, (but I half suspected at the mischievous suggestion of aunt Annie, and to curtail my evening rambles) this was exchanged for whist, and I soon ceased to regret my forced apprenticeship in Fenchurch Street, when it enabled me to make a fourth in such an original rubber. It would have been the death of Hoyle, for though all loved the game (myself in long not excepted) and piqued themselves on playing it *con amore*, there was often more of chit chat than of cogitation in the frequent pauses ; and jokes and lively sallies perpetually usurped the place of the odd-trick. It was a perfect pleasure to see thus congregated around one table three happy old people, all in character, abilities and pursuits exactly the antipodes of each other ; yet held together by a strong indissoluble bond of early companionship and mutual benevolence, and contributing by their very difference to the common stock of an enjoyment, as keen and unalloyed as if they had all been fifteen. I often felt the oldest of the party, for I had recent errors to blush for, and a recent

disappointment to sigh over ; while with the happy trio around me, time and distance had softened the harsher features of the past, and all alike looked forward with tranquil, but steadfast anticipation, to one bright cloudless future, when the pilgrimage they were thus mutually sweetening should be over.

The difference I have alluded to above was most remarkable between the two old ladies, both admirable specimens of the *genus* ; though Mrs. Sydney as far outshone her early companion as she did every one else.

To a mind of vast original powers, and boundless observation, she had added all that cultivation and literature can do for one so highly endowed by nature. She always put me in mind of her own beautiful snuff-box, whose delicate foliage in enamel set off without overlaying the intrinsic value of the massive gold.

Miss Falconar again (for, with maiden tenacity, she rejected the equivocal title of Mrs.) had been born in an age when education was to women, as it had been to Mrs Sydney, a kind of particular providence ; when their reading and writing came, if they came at all, like Dogberry's, " by nature,"

and the sister art of spelling seldom at all; and when voluminous pieces of tapestry and fantastic worked bed-curtains, "making night hideous," supplied the place of all the pursuits of modern females. Now these, Miss Annie, having had from infancy but one play-fellow, and that a brother, did most obstinately eschew. She would not work, and to sit idle she was ashamed; so in self-defence she fished, and she rode, and she hunted, along with her sole companion, all the early years of her life. She could not, it is true, accompany him to the German academy, therefore she missed acquiring the sword exercise, and never actually learned to "ride the great horse." But she scampered on a pony after the family beagles with the zest of a thorough-bred sportswoman, and could make as good a cast in the river as Black Nicol the poacher himself; in short, would have well-nigh forsworn the petticoat altogether, but for the frequent visits of Mrs. Sydney Hume, then a girl rather older than herself.

"We did good to each other," I have heard Mrs. Sydney often say; "I should have been a bookworm but for Annie, and, she but for me, would have grown up little better than a 'lubberly boy.'"

I owed my equestrian skill—which, thanks to my natural cowardice, was never *grand chose*—to her tuition; and I look back at this day with astonishment when I think, that by some *peine forte et dure*, which I cannot now conjure from oblivion, I compelled her to read the whole twelve volumes of the Grand Cyrus! I suspect it cured her of reading for life, and no wonder. Yet she has done just as well without books, as hundreds who pore themselves blind. There is about my dear Annie a fund of mother wit and shrewd observation, worth all the second-hand wisdom of mere retailers of other men's thoughts; and, what is better still, there is a stanch uprightness of mind and conduct that no sophistry could warp from the straight-forward course. When Annie wants some bit of information, or—as has happened on one or two occasions which shall be nameless—the hand of a more practised scribe than herself—she applies to her walking dictionary, as she calls me. If again I am thrown out on some subject of sporting or *cuisine*; if I want a day's shooting for some of my English laddies, or a genuine recipe for a *haggis* to make them stare, I despatch a mission forthwith to aunt Annie. In short, we are a

proof—and you may lay up my oracular *dictum*, Mr. Meredith, as a word to the wise—that similarity of disposition and acquirements is as little necessary to friendship, as it proverbially is to love. Let two people but have the same right principles for time, and the same blessed hope for eternity, and they will go through the world no worse for agreeing on little besides.”

One of the first incidents of my stay at Glen Falconar, was a visitation to the new habitation of Highland Tibbie and her interesting daughter. It was, though but half a mile from the house, beyond the limited walking powers of Mrs. Sydney; so I was despatched, accompanied by Niel M'Vicar, the old amphibious fisherman, (or “water kelpie,” as Miss Annie had christened him) by way of guide and interpreter, to inquire how the new inmates were satisfied with their dwelling.

The cottage, a very snug one, though its dingy heath-clad exterior by no means indicated the comfort and cleanliness that prevailed within, lay about half way up a green hill-side, exposed to the south, with a little patch of garden in front, an old ash or two overhanging the thatch, and a mountain-brook—a “bonnie burnie,” as Tibbie

delightedly called it—making wild music all day over its pebbly bed hard by. Through an opening in the forest that skirted the base of the hill, the noble river might be seen holding its rapid and majestic course through the glen beneath, sparkling and foaming among its native birches, whose light silver tassels the summer wind was dipping in the sunny stream. The turrets of the old mansion, with its curling wreath of patriarchal smoke, peeped out pleasantly from the tall trees of its ancestral rookery, and gave at once a cheerful social character to a scene which the wild towering features on every other hand might otherwise have invested with solitary grandeur. Behind the green sheep-dotted hill on which the cottage lay, scarce distinguishable from its useful neighbour the peat-stack (*anglice* turf-rick) beside it, rose heath-clad mountains of truly Alpine sublimity, while in front, all save the vista which revealed so picturesquely a glimpse of the rich cultivated valley and abode of its worthy owner, was one waving sea of foliage ; amid which the whispers of mountain-wind, blending with the rush of the distant river, and tiny murmurs of the brawling brook hard by, were to the heart and ear of the

Highland mother and daughter, as the music of the spheres.

„ I found the old woman seated at her wheel on the sunny spot at her door, with the panorama I have attempted to describe spread out before her. “ Does this remind you of Rannoch, Tibbie ? ” asked I, as I stood half lost in Lowland admiration of the scene.

“ It does, and it disna ! ” answered the old woman with a sigh. “ The hill’s no that unlike, and whiles, when the wind’s lown, and the sun on the water that I canna see it rinnin, I could maist think it was the bonny loch glancin afore me. But Benallan can never come up to Schehallion ; and I miss the bonny white spot o’ snaw that lies aye on the north side o’t like a swan, and winna let spring wind or summer sun wile’t awa’ frae its nest ! But I’m blythe for Helen’s sake, that she’ll never see it ; for when we were sailing ae beautifu’ afternoon past yon rock in the sea they ca’ the Bass, and hearkening to the wild scraighing o’ the sea mews and kittiwakes that gaed to my heart, I kenna wherefore, like the pipes on a hill side, she looked up, and saw just owre her head, a white bird sitting on her nest on a black

skelf o' the rocks; and she gae a skreigh maist as wild as the fowls o' the air abune her, and said, 'Mother! is yon no like the snaw-wreath on the dark side o' Schehallion?'——I minded, and she minded nae doubt, gaun up for a ploy wi' Donald to fetch down a snaw ba' to pleasure a daft English officer that came to the Rannoch to the muir-fowl. That ploy cost her Donald; for the Captain fell in fancy wi' the lad, and wadna leave the glen without him, and that weary handfu' o' midsummer snaw, made him a sodger, and my bairn a widow! It was God's will nae doubt," said the old woman, checking herself, "and we manna repine; but I'm glad there's nae summer snaw on Benallan."

"Where is your daughter?" asked I, "can I see her?" "She's dandering down the burn, I'm thinkin', this saft sunny blink, to see her bit laddie try the fishing. She kens she's no to be lang spared to him, and that makes her unco fond to be aye wi' him."

"Fishing! is he, the cretur?" exclaimed Neil M'Vicar with professional glee—"I'sc warrand I'll make a fisher o' him yet, if he bides a while in the glen—for (*sotto voce* to the old woman as I walked

forward to look out for the widow)—“ I’ve ta’en in hand to mak’ ane o’ the Englisher yonder !”

I found poor Helen about a stone’s throw from the cottage, repairing, with all a mother’s fondness, some mishap which had befallen the primitive fishing tackle of her boy, who, as if it did his little Highland heart good to get rid of the sassenach appendages of shoes and stockings, was wading up to his kilt in the clear pool, his lovely face flushed with hope and exertion, and his little tartan bonnet (once more thrown aside) floating unheeded down the stream.

“ What’s this o’t ?” cried the old poacher, addressing Helen kindly, but with all an artist’s importance, “ I’m thinkin’ ye’re but a puir hand at that gear, mistress !” “ I’ve seen the day,” answered the widow mildly, “ that it didna come sae strange to me ; but it’s lang, lang . . .” Neil snatched the line out of her hand to hide a twitch of emotion elsewhere ; and, with the instinct that teaches all kind hearts to salve the wounds they have unconsciously given, began to please and caress the child.

“ Come here, Johnny,” said he, “ and see me dress your line—and it shanna want the best flie

in an auld fisher's pouch to bring luck to your curly pow !” So saying, he unfolded to the astonished and transported urchin's eyes the many-coloured contents of a dingy old fishing-book, which neither would at that moment have exchanged for the pocket-book of a Cræsus. Our first meeting at the ferry-boat recurred to my mind, as I saw the “ curly pow,” as Neil called the flaxen ringlets of the child, once more mingling in careless exuberance with the dark, wiry, but partially grizzled, elf-locks of the “ water kelpy.”

I availed myself of the conference to converse apart with the widow ; and was glad to observe in her mild countenance a freedom at least from care and suffering, which corroborated the account she gave me of her temporary amendment. “ I'll put owre the summer, if it please God, I think, at any rate,” said she, “ and that will give my mother time to breathe after her sair journey. Whiles I maist fear I may even do mair, for there's something in the smell o' the heather, and the sough o' the wind, and the plash of the burn there, that gies me mair strength than a' the cordials the doctor orders, or the gude lady down-by sends. And O, sir, gin ye had seen the thing they ca' milk at

Dover, ye wouldna wonder the bairn and me should baith thrive sae weel on the curds and the goat's whey. I canna bring mysel to wish to live yet—and that's sinfu'—baith for my mither's sake and the laddie's—but I am content to bide the Lord's time, as our ain minister at Rannoch bade the honest man here tell me, wi' his blessing on the bairn he christened. It was mindfu' o' him, sir, and like himsel'—but I believe the lady down-by wrote to him about me. O, sir, will ye thank her better than I can do, for her Christian kindness to me and mine; and tell her gin ye please, that I canna bid wee Johnny gang to the schule in thir bonny simmer days. I ken its no right, for he's sair ahint in his learning—but the creture's been brought up amang towns and sorrow, and the braes and the burn, and the birch-woods are just a heaven upon earth to the bit birdie out o' a cage ' when winter comes, he'll learn doucely aneuch, and live to read the Bible to my mother when I'm ganè."

"You need not apologize, I am sure, to Mrs. Hume for letting him run wild in this weather," said I, recollecting what she had said to myself on the subject of study in summer.

By this time the line was dressed, and skilfully

thrown by Neil, though triumphantly drawn by his transported pupil, exhibited no longer an inanimate bunch of weeds, or ignoble though welcome minnow, but a trout, a *bona fide* trout, whose half-pound caliber made it appear in the eyes of the novice a perfect leviathan. "Did na I tell you, I would bring you luck, Johnny?" exclaimed the good-natured veteran, as pleased as the child himself. "If ye're a gude bairn, and mind your mother, ye shall come down the water some bonny day, and see the gentleman and me kill a salmon; but (with the arch smile of one who knew Rome was not built in one day), if ye want to see *him* do't, ye'll no need to be in a hurry."

On repassing the cottage, I found the old woman standing on the threshold, shading her eyes with her hand from the afternoon sun, and looking out for the group whose triumphant shout had reached her. "There will be a man for ye, belyve," exclaimed the fisherman, pointing to Johnny and his prize, which, in infant exultation, he was carrying to Granny. "There's spunk in the laddie, I assure you, Tibbic."

"He's the liker them that gaed afore him," sighed the bereaved mother of six sons, as she

stroked his curly head. "On the water and on the hill, and on the battle-field, they but aye to be foremost ; and whar are they a' now ? But they're in the hand o' God, nae doubt, and sae maun it be wi' Johnny, when his time comes."

I passed a month of the most unmingled yet varied enjoyment at Glen Falconar. To those exquisitely rural pleasures, of which I had never before even formed an idea—of fishing, as much for scenery as salmon, and shooting, when game was often forgotten amid the sublimity of the mountain panorama before me, and rambling on shaggy ponies through wild Highland glens, with a delight no hunter or racer had ever been able to awaken, and a family circle of a character so original and *piquant* as to render it almost incapable of improvement—were added all the charms of cultivated and perpetually varying society. It was now the height of the grouse-shooting season ; and Glen Falconar, in the direct road to many of the most renowned sporting quarters in Scotland, and itself affording no contemptible range for a more privileged band of domiciliated sportsmen, was the temporary resting-place of numbers of agreeable individuals from the south ; attracted either by the laird's patriar-

chal hospitality, or the *carte blanche* immemorially possessed upon it by Mrs. Sydney Hume.

It was delightful to one who already viewed that charming woman, not only with filial regard, but somewhat of the secret pride ascribed to lovers, to see how reverentially some of these young scions of nobility from a distant land approached the shrine of her whom their fathers had “delighted to honour.” Her manner with these young people was so frank, so maternal, so bewitching, that I despair of conveying any thing like the effect it produced on their feelings, except by giving vent, as I so frequently do in these pages, to my own. When they were gone, Mrs. Sydney would sometimes, in our frequent *tête-à-têtes*, give me the history of these heir-loom friendships, as she called them; not from vanity, for of that she knew not the meaning, but to gratify my ardent curiosity, and indulge in pleasing retrospects.

We had been all particularly delighted with the young English Lord G——, who, as a godson of the good lady’s, had of course a special claim on her good-will and favour. “Mr. Meredith,” said she to me, as we sat together in the window, whence she had just given him her parting benediction, “of

all my sons and daughters, and, for a single gentlewoman, I am pretty rich in such blessings, there are few I feel such an exclusive right in as that dear boy who has just left us. But for me, I am not sure he would ever have been in existence, and what his poor father's fate might have been, I yet shudder at times to reflect on. I'll tell you about it, the more readily, as you also, I think, had an escape, though a less fearful one, from the perils of the gaming-table."

"I was staying, some thirty years ago, at a friend's house in England, when this lad's father, (then himself Lord G——) came to it late one afternoon, quite unexpectedly, and evidently disconcerted to find a stranger with the family, whose long intimacy with the youth soon enabled them to discover that there was something dreadfully wrong about their usually cheerful and light-hearted visiter. He pleaded fatigue and illness (and in truth he looked the picture of both) to retire early to his room; and we talked disconsolately over his altered appearance and evident distress all the rest of the evening.

My friend, whose room was under the one he occupied, heard him pacing in deep disturbance

the live-long night ; while groans, not easily wrung from a light and youthful bosom, bore testimony to the volcano within. Seriously alarmed, and herself a person of timid and nervous character, she sent me a message at dawn to come and speak to her, and did not conceal from me her apprehensions (too sadly justified by rumours which had reached her) of some impending catastrophe.

“ It was a delicate matter nodoubt to interfere in, or even hint a suspicion of ; but if ever I did any good in this world, it was by giving delicacy to the winds, where virtue, or reputation, or human life were at stake. I was old enough, though my time-bleached locks were then only sprinkled with grey, to take on me the office of mentor, especially as I had an excuse for it in early, though suspended, acquaintance with the young man’s beautiful mother. The thought of her and her anguish decided the matter at once ; and equipping myself for a walk—no great hardship at six o’clock of a fine June morning—I waylaid my man in the verandah before the house.

“ The start of conscious guilt which he gave on seeing me, joined to his absolutely ghastly appearance, confirmed my worst fears ; and I believe it

was with a heart little calmer than his own, that I found voice to say—‘ A glorious morning, my lord—shall we enjoy our walk together ? ’ ‘ If you please, Madam,’ faltered he, cruelly disconcerted ; but politeness to ladies was then a matter of religion, and there was no getting off.

“ After some ineffectual attempts at common conversation, which was manifestly impossible, I said, abruptly—‘ Lord G ——, will you allow me to account for the intrusion of an apparent stranger in your privacy, by former intimacy with your amiable mother, who, when we met in early life in the miscalled gay world, appeared to me as gloriously unfit for it as myself ; and who, I conclude, has retained, even amid its giddy vortex, feelings to be wounded, and a heart to be broken. It is the knowledge of this which prompts my present abruptness. Will you allow me, on the grounds I have stated, to put myself in her place, and by receiving the confession which hovers on your reluctant lips, to avert from her a shock her delicate frame and spirits are less qualified than mine to sustain ? I will break the ice for you, my Lord. I have heard something of losses at play ; and vague suspicions have crossed the breast of your friends within, that

their magnitude has led you almost to contemplate an act, before which, follies and crimes though they be, they shrink into utter insignificance. They are, and far be it from me to deny it, melancholy and degrading, (nay, start not) profligate things ; for the loss which makes the heir of thousands writhe in unendurable agony, might have been transferred to some head, which it would have crushed for ever in the dust, or blown in atoms ere now to the winds of insulted heaven. Your father, I know—and your knowledge of it causes your present despair—views your late pursuits in the same uncompromising light that I do ; but if you will make me the herald of a promise that they are abjured for ever, I will undertake so to represent them, that they shall never (except in the shape of a salutary self-upbraiding) visit you for the past. Will you give me this promise, my dear young friend ?” said I, as I stepped to gaze on his averted face, ‘ and one more sacred still, to make your peace at a higher tribunal for what, I fear, you meditated of outrage *there* ?’

“ ‘ I did, I did !’ burst from the overburdened heart of the young creature (he was but nineteen at the time) ; ‘ I would have shot myself last

night, if I had not shrunk from alarming dear Mrs. L——, and I was on my way to the lake in the grounds when you met and saved me from suicide ? — ‘ God be praised ! ’ exclaimed I, much relieved by a flood of tears, ‘ God be praised ! ’ But you shall not stir out of my sight till I have your father’s forgiving, nay rejoicing answer.’

“ It may be imagined how an epistle, penned under such strong excitement, must have come home to the breast of a father, even an austere one. Lord G——, thoroughly appalled and moved, wrote in overflowing gratitude to providence for escape, and to me for interference, and to his son, as the father of the prodigal has taught us all to act, would we follow the bright example. From that hour I might have commanded the whole ministerial influence—no small one—of Lord G——; but you may imagine its good offices, though not bestowed, were ever unsolicited.

“ But it was when the old lord died, and his son succeeded and married, and asked me to stand god-mother to his boy who is just gone, that I reaped the richest reward of my bit of moral courage (for it was no more.) As Lord G—— put the innocent child in my arms, he said, in the hearing of

many to whom it was a pretty enigma, ‘ He already owes you a father, Mrs. Hume. Oh ! let him find a mother also in his own and his father’s friend.’

“ Don’t you see now what a right I have to be proud of my *grandson*, (as I may call him), and to kiss him on both sides of the face, as I did just now with right motherly good will ? This is only one of a thousand of my romances of real life, Mr. Meredith—I could fill volumes with my adventures of the sort.”

“ I wish to goodness you would, and make me their editor,” said I, “ if they are half as edifying as this of Lord G——.”

CHAPTER IX.

The hope, the fears, the jealous care,
Th' exalted portion of the pain
And pow'r of love I cannot share
But wear the chain.

BYRON.

AN opportunity was soon afforded at once to gratify my *penchant* for romances of real life, and enable my Mentor to “point” her favourite moral of the dangers of a residence abroad.

One of the few prejudices, harmless at least, if not praiseworthy, “for ev’n her failings lean’d to virtue’s side,” with which a modern liberal might have reproached Mrs. Sydney, was a deep-rooted aversion, amounting almost to horror, for continental manners and morality.

Never having herself travelled, the halo with

which scenery and associations, and climate and language, too often invest customs and practices from whose unveiled deformity British integrity would shrink, had never interposed to blind or distort her mental vision ; while the correspondence of a lifetime with her diplomatic relatives abroad, had fully withdrawn the mask from the heartless profligacy and systematic dereliction of ties and duties amid which they walked unsullied, like beings of a superior sphere. Boundless intimacy with French literature had strengthened instead of weakening the impression ; and the best echo, perhaps, of her opinions on foreign politics and foreign sentiment, might be found in that poetry of the antijacobin, which she quoted and applied with wit and humour akin to its gifted author's.

I was beguiling an inveterately wet day (for there were wet days even at Glen Falconar) by turning over a splendid collection of architectural views in Rome, with which a cousin of the laird's, a celebrated antiquary, whose life was devoted to the pursuit, had enriched the family library. As I gazed on one monument after another, of ancient splendour or modern munificence, I could not help expressing my regrets at the bar interposed by the

then all-powerful Napoleon to the innocent gratification of idlers like myself.

“Nay, Mr. Meredith,” said Mrs. Hume, to whom my remarks were addressed, “if any thing could neutralize my execration of the heartless tyrant, who, *pour se desennuyer* in the intervals of the ‘muck,’ he is ‘running’ at thrones and principalities and every institution human and divine, keeps many a dear countryman and sailor boy of my own chafing his gallant heart out, and gambling away in pure recklessness his hard-earned pittance, in that Giant Despair’s cave, called Verdun—it would be the wholesome check he imposes on volunteer idlers like yourself, by the *Taboo* he has placed on the gods of their heathen idolatry.

“Pictures, and statues, and ruins, and recollections, are fine things. When I was your age, I would have given one of my two eyes to enjoy them with the other; and even yet, at my quiet fireside, my pulse quickens, and my cheek glows, when some harmless enthusiast like our cousin Jem Falconar describes them *con amore* for my amusement and instruction. But, trust me, to dwell among them uncontaminated, a man must either be cased up like honest Jem in an impervious coat-

ing of true antiquarian rust, or fortified with an armour of principle, which few idlers, yourself, excuse me, not excepted, can boast.

“ Perhaps, as an antidote to that splendid portfolio of Piranesi, the ‘stones’ of which I fear are more pregnant with seductions than with ‘sermons,’ (though there is not one of them but might furnish an ample text,) I ought to bid you read a melancholy instance of the danger of a sojourn in degenerate Rome, which I got a dear friend, now no more, who played a Christian part in the domestic tragedy, to put down for me at the time. It will be a new page, though a dark one, in that education of yours, which, like an Eastern sage, (I am a great reader of Eastern stories) I seem destined to conduct in the way of moral apologies.

“ You have lately witnessed how much happiness springs from duties adhered to ;—may you never learn, save on paper, what utter misery arises from duties deserted. My friend’s story (if I can lay my hands on it) will be worth an hundred homilies. When you have read it, you will wonder less at my toleration for Bonaparte and his exclusive system.

“ Of the writer, I shall only say (as, if I remem-

ber right; he hints at himself,) that he had suffered more, and in a more Christian spirit than any person I ever knew. At the time he thus benevolently sought to reclaim a stray sheep from his master's fold, he had lost or survived every thing in this world, except that love for mankind which made him the earlier ripe for another.

“ I'll send you the papers if I can find them—but don't talk to me of them afterwards. They harrowed my feelings when I was better able to bear it—and I now don't court painful emotions ; life has enow of them.”

THE CAVALIERE SERVENTE.

THAT man is by nature a spendthrift, is a proposition which, as applied to the species generally, few will be disposed to deny. But if it be asked, of which among the gifts of Providence he is most recklessly prodigal—while an economist might answer his money, a philosopher his talents, and a moralist his time—my long observation of human

life would dispose me to reply—his happiness. Not only ~~that~~ inestimable heritage of endless bliss, which he daily barter^s with worse than savage imbecility for the shining baubles that have mocked him a thousand times—but that equitable portion of earthly felicity which the Author of his being, with no sparing hand, casts into the mingled lot of every child of mortality.

How few, how very few, among ^{the} not the giddy young, or unprofitably aged of our species—but even the rational, the reflecting, and the worldly-wise—can lay their hand on their heart, and say that they have extracted from human life all the happiness it was legitimately capable of affording. It is alchymy, confined, alas ! to a privileged and most limited number of adepts ; and there is unfortunately an opposite process in daily and hourly operation, by which thousands, like the ferocious Indian, range the garden of the universe to convert its sweets into poison, while, with worse than Indian stupidity, it is against themselves the deadly compound is directed.

This, I doubt not, will appear to many the gloomy view of a disappointed and melancholy man. But having myself learned from a higher teacher to

find that hidden vein of calm enjoyment, which the very ravages of a devastating torrent served to lay bare in my own humble path—I grieve the more for those who walk, reckless and unenriched, over a surface strewn with gems, which only require the polishing hand of affection and care to make their mild light illumine the darkest portions of our chequered pilgrimage.

I was one evening at the *Conversazione* of the ——— palace at Rome ; a house to which I had perhaps the more eagerly coveted admission, as its gates rarely opened for my countrymen, and the manners, style, and tone were decidedly and unadulteratedly Italian. Not a gleam of revolutionary light had penetrated its marble walls ; not a deviation from the routine of national and systematic gallantry ; not a woman unattended by her cavaliere, nor one of these chained galley slaves who looked as if made for better things, or as if he would know more what to do with his liberty than a Portuguese votary of absolutism.

Such at least was my first impression ; but a closer inspection of this degraded race convinced me, that the Sala contained one individual into whose soul the iron had entered, and whose nobler

feelings had been crushed and corroded rather than eradicated, by years of expatriation and servility. Dark as he naturally was in complexion, foreign as he had become in dress, in manners, and in idiom, there was something about the avowed, yet not entirely unblushing *Servente* of the Contessa B——, which betrayed the inextinguishable spark of British pride and energy. Amid the motley group of cassocked priests and purple Monsignori, of degenerate patricians and tinsel soldiers brought together in full costume on this evening of a high Roman *fiesta*, my countryman looked, fallen as he was “from the high estate” of his compeers, like Milton’s “Archangel ruin’d,”—or as a blackened and fire-wasted pillar from the then recently ravaged fane of San Paolo *fuori le Mura* would have shewed amid the trash of a modern stone-cutter’s work-shop.

“Englishman!” thought I, (almost tempted to apostrophize him aloud,) “what dost thou here? Has thine own land no pure smile for thee, that thou canst leave its sweetness thus to ‘batten on a moor?’ to court the thorns without the roses of wedded love—the cares without the dignity of marriage? to endure jealousy without passion, inanity

no longer thinly veiled by youth and beauty, or undisguised from thine oft averted eye by blissful ignorance of better things? What thou art now, I read upon thy conscious brow; a sad, reluctant, yet inextricable slave, like the repentant yet desponding renegade—hopeless of a return to the faith he only half abjured, yet loathing himself for that his fears but half embraced. So is it with thee, tall proud son of Britain! yoked like thine ancestors of old to Rome's triumphal car—yet writhing unsubdued even amid the dust, in which, (unlike thy sires) it is thy *choice*, not fate to grovel! 'Awake! arise; or be for ever fall'n.'

Relieved by this burst of mental improvisation, the tenor of which would, if uttered aloud in such society, have possibly secured for me, at the first safe opportunity, the honours of the stiletto, I tried to conquer my disinclination to enter into conversation with its object; but experienced in so doing (and it was apparently mutual) the sort of strange repulsion which is remarked to prevail among animals of kindred race, between whom education and habits have raised an artificial barrier. I felt the mingled contempt and dislike of the wild dog or horse of savage countries towards

one of his species degraded in his eyes by domesticity, while, in my trammelled compatriot, shyness and estrangement seemed oddly blended with embarrassment and fear. Well is it said that "conscience makes cowards of us all," for Mr. Montresor (late of his Majesty's —— dragoons,) could no more look a countryman straight in the face than Guy Fawkes, when caught under St. Stephen's with his lantern in his hand.

Most of the party sat down to play, the real, however conversation might be the ostensible object of the meeting; while a few *Abates* and soi-disant *Dilletanti* gathered into a corner to talk that species of professional *vertù*, against which, as tending to disenchant the fine arts, and infuse the poison of pedantry and cant into the exquisite cup of Roman enjoyment, I have ever resolutely shut my ears. My compatriot declined play, and shyed the *Ciceroni*, two redeeming traits; we were thus left together, and intercourse became inevitable. It soon ceased to be unacceptable on either side. Montresor, like one suddenly roused from the long oblivion of disease, had many questions to ask respecting England; and it was evident from his ignorance of recent domestic occurrences, that he

had mingled little with his (at that time rare) travelling countrymen. Indeed, the magic circle within whose precincts he had voluntarily intralled himself, forbade their collision ; and he reminded me of a knight of romance rendered not only forgetful of, but invisible to, his brethren in arms by the spells of an Armida.

As the thought crossed my brain, I glanced at his enchantress. She was still handsome, and, in any other situation, probably fascinating ; but play now absorbed her whole soul, (if soul she had ;) and though too well trained to its vicissitudes and the usages of society to have testified much emotion in losing, the fiend-like sparkle of her eye as a winner disgusted me still more. There is no accounting for flights of fancy, and she reminded me, while *raking* in with unfeminine eagerness her heaps of gold, of a beautiful demon in an old picture of the Last Judgment gathering condemned souls by a similar process.

“ It is a pity the Italians are so devoted to play,” said my countryman, as if reading my thoughts, “ for they have many social qualities, which, but for this passion, would render their intercourse delightful. I know them well,” added he, (a sigh

seemed to say too well ;) “ they dare not think, the climate forbids conviviality, and it is in play they find the oblivion their present fallen condition demands.”

“ And do you—thus knowing them,” thought I ; “ thus aware that they are but the shadow of a shade, the faded outline of a once glowing picture, the mutilated *torso* of a once Herculean statue—do you prefer a permanent residence among them to the duties, the blessings, and the ties of home ?” There must exist, methinks, for this deliberate expatriation, some more than common motive ; and though delicacy and propriety forbade all efforts to extract it on so short an acquaintance,—I determined to find it out, and, if unconnected with dishonour, endeavour to achieve the rescue and restoration to his country of this interesting young Briton.

Such I indeed found him, in the course of a long evening’s conversation, during which I learned more of Italian character, and acquired more knowledge of the less hacknied sources of classical enjoyment in Rome, than in a couple of months’ previous stay from the obsequious inanity of a professed *Cicerone*.

My evident relish for the latter subject com-

bined with a revival of his own dormant nationality, to produce on the part of my countryman an offer of his services, as a guide and fellow-lounger, during those early morning hours which spring was beginning to render delightful, though by the indolence and vacuity of his Italian taskmistress, they were still dedicated to repose. I had an engagement for next day, which precluded our meeting; but we arranged to do so in future; and I wrung the hand of this stray sheep from my native flock, thus domesticated in a herd of bigots and gamblers and demireps, as I should have done had I met him in an Esquimaux encampment or Hottentot kraal on the other side of the globe.

The excursion I made on the morrow, was one of mingled pleasure and instruction. It was to visit, in company with its venerable head, the farm attached to one of the British Catholic seminaries at Rome—and amid much invaluable information on modern and ancient Italian agriculture, and topics not generally accessible to travellers—I gathered some light on the history of my Anglo-Italian friend.

Mr. Montresor had come, almost immediately on the peace, to Rome; when, after devoting near-

ly a year to the usual pursuits of his countrymen, he had, in consequence of his protracted residence, and some Catholic connexions in England, been admitted into the bosom of Italian society, and formed the unfortunate attachment which led ultimately to his present thralldom. All this I could have guessed; but the reason assigned by my informant was wholly unexpected. He told me the expatriation of Montresor, and his retirement from the English service, was generally ascribed (though with no positive certainty) to a boyish and uncongenial marriage in his own country.

I absolutely started on hearing the word, and reflecting on the double breach of vows it implied; yet pity for my misguided countryman got the better of strong disapprobation, and the thought that the happiness of a deserted wife might be at stake, strengthened my chivalric feelings. I took leave of the good *Abbés*, with my head full of any thing but maize and melons; and woke at dawn next morning with the zeal, if not the wisdom of a reformer.

I had tact enough, however, to eschew all topics save privileged ones, at this early stage of our acquaintance; resolved to let those of a more delicate

nature come spontaneously from the evidently full heart of my new friend. Of the classics and fine arts he spoke not learnedly, but feelingly ; yet it was the feeling of one who had found even these to be vanity—who, under the “ *beau ciel d’ Italie*,” felt the curse of Cain, and was unhappy. How, indeed, should he have been otherwise ? Could he, thus circumstanced, have been gay, or even cheerful, I should never have wasted a thought on him ; but he was one whom man evidently delighted not, no, nor woman neither—however habit might have riveted her degrading chains.

The only opening afforded by this morning’s interview, was a remark echoed by a sigh, that he did not find the air of Italy agree very well with him of late. “ Why should you not try that of England ?” asked I, with perhaps imprudent warmth. He shook his head mournfully, bade me adieu, and took, with resolved though listless steps, the well-known road to the Casa B——.

I have neither time nor spirits to dwell on the minutiae of our advance towards intimacy. Suffice it, that, at the end of a month of almost daily intercourse, the confidence as well as regard of Montresor, (for thus, though an assumed name, I

shall continue to call him,) were mine, and he told me the following painful history :

“ I was quartered,” said he, “ about ten years ago, with a small detachment, at the Irish village of F——. It afforded little society, and that of the curate of the place, a widower with a daughter, became my chief resource. He was a good, easy, unsuspecting man, and Kathleen, a wild, high-spirited, untutored child of seventeen, just the creature to inspire, not a passion, but a boyish fancy, and to return it in kind. We were eternally together, and scandal began to be busy, though erroneously, with the parson’s daughter. I as little dreamt of seducing, as I did of marrying her ; but with a little management on her father’s side, or coquetry on hers, I should easily have been brought to the latter alternative, for I really liked though I scarce loved her. Both, however, were wanting, and our evil genius sent home on leave a bully brother, precisely one of those hectoring specimens of an Irishman, who form such prominent exceptions to the national character.

“ This hero gave me, without circumlocution or inquiry, the alternative of fighting or matrimony, which, had poor Kathleen been an angel, would at

once have made me perform the former. My disposition was, however, originally easy and flexible, and softened by success, (for I wounded the Hibernian) and still more by the opportune illness of the old father, and the threefold sorrows of his daughter, I voluntarily took the step which, on compulsion, I had staked my life to avoid, and married one for whom I felt at best only a garrison attachment. It was, I blush to say it to you, not proof against absence, the reproaches of my friends, and the sneers of my comrades. After the few weeks which preceded our first separation, I never saw my wife more. I fancied that by the sacrifice I had made to her reputation and feelings, I had purchased the right to consult my own ; and after exacting from my father as his share in the compromise, a handsome settlement on my deserted bride, I left her to reside as before, with her own doating parent, and set out, in a somewhat reckless mood, for the Continent.

“ The first letter I received from my wife, (not the first it would appear, of many she had written) reached me near two years afterwards, in the height of my passion for Teresa B——. It surprised me by its tone of mild remonstrance and intellectual

cultivation ; but the eloquence of an angel would then have fallen powerless on my ear, and my sentiments remained unaltered. What chance indeed had the absent Irish girl, and her hoyden manners, and careless garb, and Connaught brogue, in comparison with the stately carriage, and studied costume, and syren voice of her whom you have seen so dazzling even in decay. My very vow seemed by distance to have lost its sanctity, while a fatal delusion transferred it where it could only outrage Heaven. For some time after, I heard of Kathleen through my banker, (by whom, since my father's death, her allowance was paid,) that she lived with her's in credit, and I hoped in comfort. About six years ago, he informed me that the old man was dead, and his daughter gone to reside with a distant relation.

“ This event first revived my sense of duty, if not of affection. Kathleen had now no natural protector but myself, and conscience whispered, that if aught evil befel her, I could not falter forth even the paltry evasion of Cain—‘ Am I my brother's keeper ?’ I had vowed to love—that might be beyond my power, but to cherish, foster, and defend her was my bounden duty ; yet I lingered on, I should

have lingered yet, had heaven not sent you to my rescue.

“One step I took to silence the clamours of the inward monitor, and I trust from less selfish feelings also. I once, and once only before you won my secret from me—confided it to a young Irishman called Nugent, returning from hence to his country, and besought him to inquire into my wife’s residence and situation, and communicate the result to me. This, with the thoughtlessness of youth, he forgot to do. How indeed should a stranger feel interest when a husband could testify so little? It is now five years and upwards since he left Italy, and as even the banker’s clue is lost, from the annuity being nearly as long unclaimed, who knows if I may not ere this be robbed by death of the tardy reparation I feel too late disposed to make?”

“Do not give way to such idle forebodings, Montresor,” said I, interrupting him, “nor call by the cold name of reparation the long arrear of felicity, which I trust is in store for you, and one more deserving. The death of her father probably left your wife independent, and mistaken pride has made her spurn your provision.”

“ I trust it is so,” answered he, “ and yet I have misgivings in my mind which make me wretched, and urge me to get rid of this intolerable suspense. Oh ! if I am indeed once more blest with a sight of my injured wife, how will I strive by lavish, and, God knows, undissembled tenderness, to indemnify her and myself for years of desertion on her part, and guilt on mine.”

Such feelings continued to prevail, gathering from delay and obstacles the strength and intensity of passion, till we were enabled (after a civil secession from the Casa B——, which scandalized all the *correct ideas* of the Roman matrons) to quit Italy on our way to Britain. The long repressed energy of Montresor’s character, stimulated by remorse and hope, the two most gigantic levers of human nature, lent wings to our journey ; but it defeated itself in the end by inducing, on our approach to a cooler climate, one of those intermittent fevers, which vicissitudes of temperature, combined with rapid travelling, so frequently occasion.

We scarce halted anywhere, for sight-seeing was out of the question with us both. But at Turin, where our carriage had to undergo a necessary repair, Montresor, whose fancy (except at moments

of peculiar excitement) was often filled with funereal images, proposed going to see the church of the Superga, situated on a neighbouring hill, and containing the bodies of the kings of Sardinia ; the last monarch lying in state in its subterranean cloisters, until the obsequies of his successor entitle him to sepulture.

The day was sultry, and the walk fatiguing, the chill of the vault consequently more striking both to mind and frame. Montresor, who had been complaining, shivered as he stood gazing on the grisly pageant, and said, “ I am not well ; let us go down again.” From that day he had regular returns of fever, during the paroxysms of which we were forced to halt, but resumed our journey at the intervals.

Switzerland had for us no attractions—can even its beauties minister either to a mind or frame diseased ? So we proposed striking across from Chambéry through France, and embarking at Bourdeaux direct for Ireland. As Montresor’s health became worse, his anxiety to reach his goal became excessive—his fluctuations from hope to despair, painful in the extreme.

In one of the latter moods, he proposed, when

we should arrive at the neighbouring village of E——, a short digression to the convent of La Grande Chartreuse ; a place, he said, whose austerities had always filled him with mingled admiration and horror, and which he felt a strange desire to see. I gratified him, for it involved but a short delay, and coincided with my own feelings of curiosity. The scenery is wild beyond description, and harmonizes but too well with rules that extinguish every sentiment of humanity, and annihilate every tie of nature. Father and son have dwelt unloving and unknown within its ghastly precincts, and this sepulchre of the living has spread its marble shroud alike over genius, rank, misfortune, and crime.

I shuddered to pass even a single night there, but Montresor experienced a strange sort of pleasure in questioning the *Padre forestiere*, and eliciting from him the gloomiest and most terrific features of the institution.

We got away at last, but I shall not soon forget the look which Montresor cast on the receding turrets, or his exclamation, “What a temple to conscience is here.”

We were late in returning to the village where

we had left our carriage the previous day, and Montresor was too much fatigued to risk travelling a stage further to the town of H——, the usual sleeping place of visitors to the Chartreuse. The landlord of the village inn hesitated about accommodating us, and when I remarked on the apparent size of his house, informed me its best apartments were already occupied by an English family, the master of which was an invalid, and paid liberally on condition of perfect quiet and privacy. "Monsieur," he said, "had fallen and broken his arm in a sporting excursion in the neighbouring mountains, and was only slowly recovering under the assiduous cares of his lovely wife, who scarce ever quitted him by night or day." Without the permission of this *charmante femme* at least, mine host would not consent to our remaining even in the sorry apartments he could offer. This difficulty I soon settled by a civil message to the lady. One sick Englishman had strong claims on the sympathy of another, and we were made welcome to stay, though evidently not during pleasure, but indisposition.

The latter plea seemed likely to be of indefinite duration: for Montresor's fever, heightened by

impatience, assumed a more irregular form, and quite precluded travelling even during occasional remissions. When these occurred, however, I got him into the landlord's garden, when to the good effects of the fresh air, and balmy season, were added the cheering smiles and delightful prattle of a lovely English cherub of a child, whose rosy cheek and unsophisticated nature struck Montresor the more from his long residence among the handsome but prematurely womanly children of Italy. The little creature soon got over her shyness, and returned our caresses with innocent familiarity; but even amid friends, and birds, and flowers, she pined for her parents, and watched eagerly for the moment of readmission to her father's sick room.

“Oh! if mamma would only come out a little,” she often would say, “but then papa would miss her—for if she only shuts the curtain and sits quiet a little, he starts up and asks if she is there—and she says, Yes! dear Edmund, always here! and he says, God bless you, and falls asleep. And then when he is better she reads to him verses, beautiful verses and fine stories; and she makes nice broth for papa, and boils his egg herself, for

(with a significant gesture) the French are so dirty, and papa cannot bear any thing not nice. Mamma eats nothing herself, and I don't think she ever sleeps, for whenever I turn on my crib and say 'Mamma,' she is awake and answers."

This artless prattle never failed to draw a deep sigh from Montresor, contrasting, as he must have done, my awkward bachelor attentions with the smoothed pillow and studied comfort of his brother sufferer. "I shall die among strangers," he would say in a desponding moment: "Do not think Curzon that I undervalue your brotherly kindness, but I *might* have closed my eyes on a faithful female bosom, and gladdened them in death with the sight of a cherub like this!" I generally forbore to combat these feelings, trusting they were only the fruits of debility, and would in due time enhance and render more permanent the bliss of reconciliation.

One of the chief evils of our protracted stay, was the constraint it evidently imposed upon our fellow-lodgers. The lady, whose health was sinking under confinement, the French servant hinted would not quit her chamber while we remained; and we felt keenly the annoyance we involuntary occasioned. Montresor, however, got so much better as

to induce a hope of his resuming our journey, when he was suddenly thrown back by an extraordinary incident, which appeared to me too much akin to his late gloomy and superstitious feelings.

Beyond a lane which skirted the back part of the house, into which my friend's windows looked, lay the cemetery of the village ; a prospect in itself neither gloomy nor unpleasing, for it was decorated, according to the custom of that primitive country, with plots of flowers, and gilded crosses, and other fanciful and almost cheerful memorials of the affection of the living.

On going into Montresor's room one morning, and gaily asking him, if he felt able to travel—he shocked me by his ghastly appearance, and replied, “ I shall never travel—I must lie ere long in that church-yard. My wife's ghost stood on yonder grave last night, and summoned me. Call it not fancy or delusion ; by all the hopes of man, I saw her, as I now see you.”

Strange as was the matter of this assertion, its manner had the calmness and sobriety of truth, and I felt unable to combat it with the ordinary weapons of ridicule or argument. I set it down to fever, and should have thought no more of it, had

not little Lucy, whom I met in the garden while my friend kept his room—thus accosted me. “Mamma frightened Lucy last night sadly. When I was asleep, she went out in the moonlight to take a walk, and when I woke she was not there, so I cried—and when I looked again, I saw a black figure going backward and forward at the foot of my bed! I should have screamed, but I remembered papa and mamma would have been angry—so I hid my face in the bedclothes till mamma came—and then she kissed me, and showed me it was only her shadow in the moonlight that moved in the room, as she walked before the window.”

Here was Montresor's apparition explained at once, and the supposed resemblance to his wife easily accounted for by similarity of dress and figure. I hesitated a moment whether to undeceive him, but it was the natural and obvious course, and I pursued it, little aware of the consequences.

I shall not soon forget my astonishment, when, instead of tranquillizing poor Montresor, my explanation made him start up in bed with frightful energy. “If you speak truth,” cried he, “I am undone! for as God shall judge me—Kathleen O'Brien stood either in or out of the body, before

me this night." A thrill of horror ran through my frame—a presentiment of evil curdled my very blood. I mechanically flew out of the room to exchange suspense for certainty; and in so doing, ran against the child, who stood waiting without—her innocent face in such ineffable contrast with the agony of remorse within. "Pierre told me my English cousin (for so in sport she called Montresor) was worse to-day—so I have brought the book of pretty verses mamma reads to make papa better." I took the book unconsciously—opened its title page, and saw "Edmund Nugent Ballinamara," written on the first leaf.

The name was a knell to my fast waning hopes. It was that of Montresor's Roman acquaintance whom he had commissioned to seek out Kathleen—and who, in the mysterious ways of Providence, had been made by her unfaithful husband the instrument of his own eternal misery and remorse. But for Montresor's introduction, Nugent would never have seen Kathleen, but for his desertion, he could never have injured her—but for the too true account he was enabled to give of his open attachment and devotion to another—never would the long-tried, long faithful, and long-resisting Kath-

leen have at length fallen a victim to the sophistry which lulled without deceiving, her naturally strong and upright mind.

All this flashed like lightning through mine, as I gazed on the fatal name, and thought of the corroboration afforded by its very relinquishment for another—by the privacy so studiously courted—by the incident of the church-yard.

What to do under such circumstances became a dreadful responsibility. The lives of two already enfeebled human beings seemed at stake, the shock to either must be terrible—the remorse of both, overwhelming. And Kathleen, too, that creature more sinned against than sinning, whose conduct under illusory ties had shown so plainly what it would have been in holier bands, what was to be her fate? I prayed in mental agony for direction how to act in a case, whose only issue could be misery to all concerned.

I was saved the trouble of deliberation by a scene that baffles description. Kathleen, missing the child at an unusual hour, and trusting to my being occupied with my sick friend, had ventured out on the stairs to seek for her. I had but time for one look on the most meekly beautiful of human

countenances, ere it was distorted with horror and agony. The door of Montresor's room opened, and hastily clothed as for a journey, he issued forth, exclaiming, "My wife! dead or living I will see her!" The first object that crossed his path was the child—he dashed it aside with frightful vehemence—then falling at its mother's feet, he said, in a subdued voice, "Forgive me, Kathleen! your deserter, your betrayer kneels before you in the dust. God is my witness, and this good man, that I was on my way to seek and cherish you—that is past. We meet no more on earth. That dream, too, Kathleen, of unsanctified love in which I helped to lull you, it is my lot to scare. I could not even by my death lend sanctity to vows founded on guilt, and I feel doomed to live long years of penitence. Say you forgive me, Kathleen—say you will no longer live in guilt whose damning stain is mine! I have known but to lose you on earth—let penitence unite us in heaven."

He buried his face a moment in her dress, her head sunk powerless upon his in a death-like faint, when another ghastly spectre mingled in the group, another rightful sufferer for his sins and those of others. Montresor just looked up from

Kathleen's knee, a shudder crossed his frame—again he hid his face—with a convulsive effort, muttered, “ I forgive you,” and rushed again into his chamber.

There needed no words to make the unhappy Nugent comprehend the whole. He saw his guilty cup of happiness dashed in a moment by eternal justice from his lips—he saw the victim of his fond but unhallowed passion stretched insensible before him—her injured yet erring husband vanishing like an accusing spirit—her innocent unconscious child doomed from the cradle to disgrace and wretchedness.

Why dwell on such a complication of misfortunes ; why harrow the feelings of others or mine own by irremediable calamity ? Why, were it not to prove that from one bitter root,—Montresor's wanton desertion of his plighted vows—sprang all this blighting upas tree of misery. This sum of ravaged health and blasted hope, and ruined peace, and wounded fame—aye more—this utter waste of all that mine of gentle and sublime affection, which, garnered for him by heaven in a wife's faithful bosom, but scattered to the winds by his own reckless improvidence, had “ left him poor indeed.”

How could such a tale end but in death ? The grave alone could close over wounds so immedicable. Kathleen died first. Her frame, preyed on from almost childhood, by desertion, anxiety, and remorse, soon gave way. She never left the inn of B——, till laid by my French servant and myself in “ the church-yard she had prophetically haunted.”

Nugent, who, at her earnest entreaty, left the place immediately, drooped more slowly at the neighbouring baths of Aix, his pillow smoothed by ruder hands than once had soothed his wayward malady. I closed his eyes for Kathleen’s sake—for she had looked the wish she dared not utter—and her child is mine, for she had not a friend alive, and Nugent’s are a proud and sordid race.

Montresor fulfilled his own prediction respecting “ years of penitence,”—for already half reconciled to Catholicism by his Italian sojourn, he grasped in his despair her expiatory tenets. The first and last billet I received from him after these sad events, was dated from *La Grande Chartreuse*.

CHAPTER X.

Know'st thou the land where the cold Celtic wave
Encircles the hills which her blue waters lave ;
Where the virgins are pure as the gems of the sea,
And their spirits are light, for their actions are free ?
 MRS. ELLIOTT.

I HAD advanced so rapidly under the theoretic instructions of the good old laird, and the practical lessons of Niel M'Vicar, as to long to engage in single combat with any salmon of ordinary calibre ; and I eagerly awaited, like other heroes of chivalry, an opportunity of thus signalizing myself, and silencing by ocular demonstration of my prowess the lingering smile of incredulity which played over the shrewd features of aunt Annie. “ He's a gude lad,” I had overheard her saying one day to her brother—“ and really makes a wonderfu' hand

o' the muirfowl for a town-bred Englisher—but as to his catching a salmon at the end o' a month's apprenticeship, I would just as soon think o' his catching a whale. He's mair likely to catch a lassie, brother, and that's may be what ye would na like to see him try."

This last inuendo had been to me at the time as unintelligible as other Sibylline oracles, inasmuch as the laird had neither daughter nor female inmate to exercise my talents; while my own pre-occupation of mind and heart made me secretly smile at the old lady's prognostics. But next morning was destined to explain the enigma, and put to a pretty strong test my unalterable devotion to the absent and unpropitious Pauline.

Just about noon, when the sultry heat would have conquered a less enthusiastic fisher, and the dazzling clearness of the river disheartened a more experienced one, I was still beating the water with laudable perseverance, when my attention was suddenly called off from the tantalizing nibble of some trout, too silly to stay in the shade, but too wise to be caught in the sun, by the cheerful voices and advancing footsteps of a bevy of ladies.

The river was but a few hundred yards from the

house, and the party was headed by Mrs. Sydney, who, the elegant economy of her head-dress shaded, without being discomposed by a large old-fashioned calash, had been tempted thus far by the singular brilliancy of the day, and the sportive entreaties of a youthful favourite, who, as she hung upon the other arm of the stately old laird, reminded me of a delicate sweet-scented clematis encircling the old grey dial hard by. The figure of aunt Annie engaged in earnest conference with another elderly female, brought up the rear; but my eye could only rest on the advanced guard, and on its lovely contrast of venerable and time-honoured age, with such a personification of youth as only poetry I imagined could exhibit.

I have seen before and since many exquisite combinations of form and feature—many specimens not of faultless, certainly, yet of resistless female beauty; but there was something so gay, so ethereal, so artless, so much of the ideal purity and reckless simplicity of youth in the creature who now stood before me, that I really (at a more romantic hour, and less respectably chaperoned) might have been excused for mistaking her for some bright spirit of the woods, or sportive nymph of the wa-

ters—the very delicious “Undine” of the German poet’s fancy.

I sprung hastily up the bank to meet the party, and having in so doing succeeded, like an inexperienced novice, in entangling my tackle among the willows—it was amid all the embarrassment attendant on such awkwardness that I endured their ironical greeting. “Sister Annie,” cried the laird, a little disconcerted at the plight of his promising pupil, “this is all your doing, to come and spoil Mr. Meredith’s sport, for fear the honour of Scotland should suffer, and an Englishman catch a salmon.”

“I am sure,” answered Miss Annie, with her usual sly gravity, “I needed na have doubted that, when, as far as I can at present see, a salmon seems to have caught an Englishman.” “And you have caught a Tartar, laird,” said Mrs. Sydney, good-humouredly, so we’ll sound a truce, under cover of this white flag here, playfully waving the light muslin drapery which encircled her young friend, and taking her by the hand.

“Mr. Meredith,” said she, addressing me, “I hope you can so far suspend your hostilities with the inhabitants of the Black water as to make the

acquaintance of their liege lady, from whose domains they are lineally descended, and with whom you must settle your future rights to wage war with her finny subjects".

" You may give him *carte blanche*, Alice," cried the inexorable aunt Annie, " you may eat your grandmother in the shape of an old grey salmon when he catches her, I assure you."

" Nay, nay, Annie," said Mrs. Sydney, who seemed to think the joke had gone far enough, " as you are strong, be merciful to a young brother of the craft. Mr. Meredith," continued she, " let me introduce you to Miss Moray of Castle Moray."

" Alias my Elsie," said the good laird, putting his stalwart arms round the slender waist of his niece, who, after a bow of inexpressible natural grace to me, returned the old man's caresses with almost infantine playfulness.

My first emotions of admiration were now mingled with surprise. I had heard, rather incidentally, since my arrival in the north, of a great heiress, whose *territory* (for so it might be called) stretched for miles into the far Grampians, while it comprised a great extent of fertile lowland, encircling and almost eclipsing the comparatively bound-

ed estate of her uncle, Mr. Falconar. This heirless, if I thought of her at all, I had invested with the usual qualities of such unfortunate beings, pride, hauteur, or its hardly less offensive substitute, condescension. I neither knew nor cared if she were young, and felt sure she could not be pretty. My surprise may then be imagined when, instead of the proud Amazonian chieftainess, or bold minion of fashion I had anticipated, there stood before me the most unsophisticated of Nature's children, apparently just emerged from the nursery, and equally unconscious either of her fortune or of her charms.

“Come, come,” said the laird, “this is too bad ; four saucy spinsters and one old sportsman like myself, are terrible odds against one young fisher !” “Not young enough, however,” exclaimed I, (disentangling with more haste than dexterity my unfortunate line,) “to stay beating the water by himself, when he can have the excuse of such company for deserting a thankless office. As an angler, I am bound to do the honours of the river, and after keeping you so long in the sun, methinks I cannot do better than lead the way to one of the shadiest

spots on its margin. What say you, Mrs. Sydney, to the ‘hunter’s pool?’”

“With such a good walking-stick,” said she good-humouredly, taking my arm, “I don’t despair of reaching it.” “And I’ll run back to the house and order luncheon,” cried the sweet girl, evidently with the ease of one perfectly at home, and bounding off like a startled fawn; while aunt Annie, “on hospitable thoughts intent,” more leisurely followed her. The laird with natural courtesy, offered his arm to his niece’s governess, (an old friend and favourite,) and Mrs. Sydney and I fell insensibly a little behind.

“A good specimen of a fine unaffected Scottish lassie, is she not, Mr. Meredith?” said the old lady stopping to breathe, and looking back affectionately after Alice. “I told you when we first embarked together, that you would see more yet of Scots beauties, but I little thought the picture would be crowned with the native charms of our Highland Fairy. She has been passing the summer with her maternal governess, at a bathing village near Edinburgh, to be within reach of masters; but it seems they are driven away by an epidemic, and her own

house not being in order for her reception, she is come to gladden her old uncle with an unexpected visit. He is her chief guardian, and many people blame him for educating her in retirement and simplicity. But it was his poor sister's last request that her child might be brought up among the people she had herself loved, and been adored by; so she is as unsophisticated as the roe in her native forest. But we have not neglected her either. Women who know little, are apt to be pedantic; I suppose it is because Alice knows a great deal, that she is so delightfully natural. But then, to be sure, she is not aware of knowing any thing. She has never been flattered or spoiled, or taught to think herself the better for a few acres more or less, though she sometimes feels the responsibility they involve, and then our light-hearted Elsie can be grave—as grave as”

“Your English favourite,” I answered, venturing for the first time directly to allude to Pauline. My doing so seemed somehow to relieve my companion; and for the first time also, she followed up the slight opening, by saying with her usual animation, “I heard to-day from Manchester: Captain Clitheroe has been very ill, and his daughter of

course, painfully occupied ; but there is a sunshine brighter still than that of youth and gaiety, and it beams on Pauline even in a parent's cheerless sick-room. How I sometimes wish she could escape from the confinement, to enjoy, as she would do *con amore*, such a spot as this !”

As she said this, we found ourselves at the hunter's pool, a deep emerald bason, where the lovely river, like a toil-spent and o'er-wearied infant, slept as placidly as though it had not for miles above been chafing and waging with the eternal rocks not altogether unsuccessful warfare. Some giant alders had availed themselves of the sheltered nook to flourish in patriarchal vigour ; the festoons of the Highland briar-rose, now flowerless, were eclipsed by a natural canopy of luxuriant brambles (glowing with their bright red unripe berries) which fell from the rocks above ; while the pebbly fountain which they sheltered from the noontide heats, was the privileged resort of myriads of finny loungers, whose occasional gambols athwart their watery *sans souci* were as visibly displayed as ever were those of their captive brethren, the gold fish, disporting in a crystal bason.

“ This is a spot not to be seen every day, Mr.

Meredith," said Mrs. Sydney, as I arranged for her a seat on a moss-covered ledge of rock. "You are indebted to me for introducing you to it, but I hope it will be one day the least of your obligations."

We were now joined by the rest of the group, with the usual ample *matériel* of a Highland luncheon; and such a meal, with such a party, in such weather, and in such a spot, he would be a bold man that should attempt to describe.

I am now come to a point in my idle narrative, when I scarce know how to adhere to that resolution of telling "the truth, and the whole truth," which can alone render the history of a human mind either interesting or profitable, without incurring one of two very unfavourable suspicions, without being either set down as a puppy, led by self-complacency to attribute to a fair young female bosom sentiments which never had existence, or as what the French call "*un fat*," (thank Heaven there is no English word for the un-English idea) capable of converting them into matter of boasting if they had. But I appeal to all who know best, and most highly esteem, aye venerate, as I do, the female character in all its phases, from the delicate slender crescent which, hardly as yet above the ho-

rizon, only gives promise of the coming brightness a few more revolutions of the soft planet will disclose—to its unclouded, and surely not unlovely wane, when, after a long reign of radiance and usefulness, it is seen gently fading into the dawn of an immortal day, whether there is not a period, a short but exquisite stage in the transition from infancy to womanhood, when susceptibility is not only its chief, but perhaps most resistless characteristic? A little earlier, its unconscious bias towards all that is youthful and congenial, and light-hearted like itself, is lavished upon the bounding lamb, and sportive kitten, and carolling bird; and to what enthusiasm these can be loved, no brother or parent need be told. But these cease to amuse and interest, companionship more equal and intellectual must be substituted, and when denied by circumstances its natural field, in the love of a sister or youthful female associate, methinks it were hypercritical and fastidious in the extreme, to see in the undesigning predilection for a young kindred spirit of the other sex, aught less feminine or less graceful than the fair guileless creature herself imagines it to be.

Such at least, heaven is my witness! were the

sentiments of unabated respect, yea increased admiration for a delicacy I may have seen equalled, but never exceeded, with which I gradually yielded to a floating suspicion that I was becoming not altogether indifferent to the beautiful Alice Moray. I have already, I trust, said enough to prove, that the supposition, if well founded, was compatible with all the retiring graces of a character which needed only maturity to be, alas ! as superior to thus placing its preference, as it was now unskilled altogether to conceal it.

From her earliest years, Alice had lived entirely with people, delightful certainly, but immeasurably removed from her by age ; and till we met, she had never known the luxury of a companion to whom it cost no effort and no sacrifice to to be as light-hearted, and far idler and more childish than herself. My society filled a hitherto tenantless void in her life, if not in her heart, and we all know what it is to be *first* in creating pleasurable feelings of any kind. Alice and I soon extended our rides and rambles far beyond the powers of her old hereditary groom and staid elderly governess. She had workmen engaged in extensive alterations at the Castle, and this was a

delightful excuse for an almost daily excursion up the glen ; and once there, the ponies were to be fed and rested, while the unwearied, nay only invigorated riders, were quite fresh for a walk to some lonely shieling, where—(Glen Falconar being too much on the Lowland frontier to afford such rarities)—an old Ossian-reciting crone, or grey shepherd, yet guiltless of “ Sassenach,” might be found, to gratify my Gaelic enthusiasm and English curiosity.

I know not whether it was the delicious and wholly novel character of these enchanting rambles—that clear transparent Highland September sky, on which every mountain-peak *tells* with such fantastic acuteness of outline—or that beautiful autumn tint of a Highland wood, where every bright hue, from the yet lively green of the glossy oak-copse, to the deep orange and crimson of the deciduous trees besides, may be seen gaily blending on the deep sombre background of the unalterable national pines, like a rainbow on a thunder cloud—or the wildly picturesque effect of the Highland garb on the mountain-side it so well becomes—or the result of them all put together, which delighted my very soul ; but it was next to impossible to enjoy them as I did, and not gain

daily favour, on that very score, in the eyes of one, to whom her hills, and her woods, and her native tartan were dear as the air she breathed.

Then the pre-occupation of my own heart and mind with another, the very ascendancy there of a yet brighter—though unpropitious luminary—gave to my attentions (for such they certainly were) an almost brotherly freedom; while other and warmer feelings, by exciting distrust, and calling up that beautiful instinct of self-defence, which the bare suspicion of meditated attack always awakens in the mind of woman, would, if they did not altogether change the nature of her sentiments, have at least made her fully alive to their character.

But the opposite result of the unhesitating confidence with which the sweet girl regarded one so evidently undesigning, was to blind her completely to the shade of partiality—yes! so far methinks, without ministering food for scoffing to prudes or puppies, I may extend my admission—which began to steal over her towards the only young man of tolerable exterior, warm feelings, and congenial pursuits whom a retired education had yet thrown in her way. Yet so delicate, so all but impercepti-

ble were the indications of this too flattering preference, that it might perhaps—as be it remembered, I had no special interest in detecting it—have remained unsuspected by its unworthy object, but for the stronger reflected light in which it was soon given to my view, by the indignant sarcasms of aunt Annie.

She began, with less of tact and knowledge of the world than I should have expected—did these qualities not often desert the wisest when their feelings were at stake—to rally Alice unmercifully upon her love of riding and walking, and me on my singular proficiency in Highland customs and exercises. She went so far one day, in the exuberance of her alarm, as to hint that the improvements at the Castle were going on, under my, no doubt, *privileged* superintendence.

From Alice's flush—for a blush it was not—of surprise and resentment at this *l'auendo*, I first gathered its exact import; and the dignified *hauteur* of the look which succeeded, the only one since our acquaintance which savoured of the haughty chieftainess I had once imagined her, taught me for the first time what might have been the extent of my hopes, (shall I more candidly

say my success?) had I been disposed to “achieve the greatness” thus almost “thrust upon me” by the injudiciousness of friends.

I could have half enjoyed prolonging Miss Annie’s uneasiness; but the lately perceptible abatement of cordiality in the laird, and ill-concealed increase of gravity in Mrs. Sydney, the sacred ties of hospitality which it was agony even in thought to infringe, above all, the paramount duty of opposing to an incipient and unrequited predilection the antidote which absence would safely and surely administer, made me resolve—it may be believed not without pain—to tear myself at once from Glen Falconar.

I am sworn, as I above hinted, to tell the “whole truth,” and I should not be strictly doing so, were I to hold up this act of gratitude and propriety, as a heroic sacrifice, in one, whose wishes (for hopes, alas! it would have been presumptuous to call them,) were yet fondly lingering around the shrine of another. But, says the French poet :

“ Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable ! ”

and I should not be following the maxim, were I

to pretend, that a rejected and nearly hopeless lover of five and twenty, a young man with fortune quite ample enough to entitle him legitimately to aspire to all those newly valued natural beauties, and territorial possessions, which fortune alone could not suffice to buy—was altogether insensible to the possibility—aye, indubitable facility, of marrying by her own spontaneous choice, and though perhaps with the reluctant consent, yet the avowed previous good opinion of her nearest relations—the young and beautiful heiress of the most desirable property in Scotland !

I am half ashamed thus to enumerate advantages, which, were I a hero of romance, ought I know to have been in my eyes as the dust in the balance. But while I own that they were something more to one who, alas ! had not the power to conjure the delightful, though dowerless Pauline, into the opposite scale, they did not for a moment induce me to postpone my departure from Glen Falconar.

No sooner was my virtuous resolve fully formed, than fearful, like other novices in mental discipline, lest it should evaporate, I hastened to communicate it to Mrs. Sydney. The rest of the

party had walked out to enjoy the splendours of a brilliant autumnal afternoon ; but I found my old friend, whose limbs not unfrequently refused to keep pace with her mind's activity, devouring at the library window, with all the avidity of fifteen, the gorgeous picture afforded by the lingering western ray on the beautiful chain of hills before it. "Is not this a glorious prospect?" she exclaimed as I entered, a slight tinge of the same roscate glow which illumined the purple hills reflected on her venerable cheek, and adding to the animation of her speaking eye. "Is it not enough to make poets and painters of us all? I have often regretted that accomplishments, as they are called, were not in fashion in my day ; for I am sure I have within me the seeds of a Gainsborough or a Nasmyth. How I should love to paint the effect of the lengthening shadows on that proud fantastic range, on whose ever varying surface they disclose, like hidden treasure, deep glens and fairy waterfalls, that slumber unsuspected in the glare of noon ! Byron calls the stars the 'poetry of heaven.' I am sure earth's poetry is to be found in rocks and mountains such as these. I could weave you a noble epic, with many a little episode

of surpassing beauty, out of the tropes and figures furnished by Glen Falconar."

"I appreciate your politeness," added she, with a good humoured smile, "in forbearing to laugh at my antiquated enthusiasm. When you came, you would have done so—maugre your metropolitan breeding; but I really think our Highland air has worked its usual spells. I have caught you gazing on the clouds, as if, with Fin Mac Coul, you saw in them the ghosts of your ancestors; and really just now I heard a sigh that the hills of Morven might not have disdained to echo."

"It is a sigh of farewell, Mrs. Hume, to those very objects you allege, and justly, are becoming so dear to me. I am going away to-morrow, and came to tell you so."

Surprise was very legible on my old friend's eloquent countenance, but it seemed oddly blended with satisfaction. "Indeed?" was the mingled ejaculation of both; "and am I sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Meredith to inquire the reason of this sudden determination?"

Quite enough so to command not only information, but truth. I might, and probably shall to others, resort to the stale device of letters, business,

what you will ; but from you, Mrs. Hume, I first learned the value of truth and principle, and I will tell you that I go because I am neither a coxcomb, nor a fortune-hunter—and because”—— here I found I had embarked on ground too delicate to be easily got over.

“ Because,” said Mrs. Hume, compassionating my perplexity, “ others may have already seen in you something better than either. I understand you, Edmund,” (it was the first time she had called me so,) “ I admire and approve you. Go, my dear young friend, as your honourable feelings suggest, from a scene of possible danger and temptation. While I wish, and from my heart, that my richly gifted child here may find as manly a protector in her own privileged sphere, I must remember that the humbler daughter of my predilection will want but a few such traits of character to make her rescind a hasty, and I trust not irrevocable judgment. The story of your disinterested fealty to the absent, will not lose, believe me, in my telling ; and I but imitate the sincerity you have manifested, when I say, that you consult your own happiness by it. You are too young in mind to marry a child—too old in years to become a Highlander—

too high-spirited to like to be looked down upon, and too disinterested to find happiness in wealth. The husband of Alice Moray must be her superior in years and talent, her equal in rank and country, else they will both be mismatched and miserable."

"But," added the good lady, as if some invisible mental link of association brought the subject to her mind, "you must defer your chivalric resolution, *meo periculo*, for a week or so. That short interval of frank but guarded intercourse may, properly improved, rather dispel than foster a dawning illusion; while I should grieve were you to miss the opportunity of adding to your list of friends—friends *comme il y en a peu*—Roderick Falconar, who comes to us in a day or two, rich in scars and glory, richer still in the warmest heart and most upright mind I ever watched from infancy to manhood."

"I should certainly like to meet him of all things!" exclaimed I, for I remembered that he was one of the accomplished persons whom Pauline had enumerated amid her pleasing recollections of Scotland. In addition to a little uncharitableness on this score, I envied him his fame as a successful soldier, and his lot as heir of Glen Falconar; and

no one need be told that curiosity is never keener than when thus amiably founded. “A Highland officer !” muttered I to myself, “a sort of Hector MacIntyre, I suppose, with a smack of pedantry superadded by his college education.” “And yet” (whispered candour,) “how can you form such absurd expectations of the son of Mr. Falconar, and father of little Flora. If he is like that child, he must be the handsomest Celt that ever wore philibeg.”

“Would you like to see him now ?” said Mrs. Sydney, as if answering my secret cogitations. I half started, while she unlocked a drawer of her scrutoire, and produced one of those exquisite miniatures which mitigate the pains of absence to many a faithful bosom. “There,” said she, wiping the glass with maternal tenderness, “there is Roderick ! as he was drawn a gay and gallant bridegroom for her who slumbers in a foreign grave. I wish you to see him as youth and nature made him, ere years and sorrow retouched the likeness, only to render it, to all who know him, doubly interesting.”

I absolutely shrunk before the brilliant personification of triumphant heroism which the picture

exhibited. The fearless character of the high and polished forehead, the latent sparkle of the deeply fringed dark-blue eye, the smile of happy love that played across the youthful lips, the clustering curls of raven hair disposed with soldier carelessness around the manly brow, called forth an involuntary burst of admiration.

Mrs. Sydney sighed, and as she took the picture from me, wiped its glass again, and not from dust alone. "Such was Roderick Falconar," said she, "'our beautiful and brave,' at two and twenty. At thirty he is something better. Still beautiful, as toils and griefs allow a man to be, who has drank deep of both, and brave, not in the boyish thirst for excitement, but with the chastened value of a man for fame and country. His heart, and that bright smile were buried long in his young wife's grave; his little girl has lived to bid them both revive. You will see few things more affecting than their meeting; she is to him, lost mother, wife, and sisters; and he, just all the world to Flora."

CHAPTER XI.


And thou wert destined for thy part
The firmest mind, the noblest heart,
Artless, save in the warrior's art,
And in that art the first !

MR. CROKER.

It was not long ere this interesting meeting took place, and I became its involuntary witness, precisely from the natural delicacy which forbade my intrusion upon aught so sacred. Anxiety to be in nobody's way on such an occasion, induced me, on the day when Major Falconar was expected, to set out early on a partridge-shooting ramble ; and as the nature of the country necessarily limited my range in quest of such game within narrow bounds, the sole companion of my sport was an old sagacious pointer, long debarred by increasing infirmity from the greater exertions of " the hill," but de-

lighted to do to one, whom he began to consider no stranger, the honours of the home fields of Glen Falconar.

Oscar and I had done wondrous execution, considering that the one was a raw recruit, and the other an invalided Chelsea pensioner ; and the September sun was beginning early and rapidly to sink behind the western hills, (the only drawback, by the by, of an Alpine country,) when my time-worn comrade began to “ point ” visibly homeward. I was forcing my way, all thoughts of sport for the day being over, through the thick copsewood which fringed the avenue; to saunter home by its beautiful course, when just as I emerged from the thicket, I heard the roll of wheels, and caught a glimpse of an empty curricie, whose slight smoking horses a groom with a cockade in his hat was leading up the steep ascent, overhanging the river about a mile from the house. The vehicle was of course Major Falconar’s, and it immediately occurred to me that he had got out to walk, to enjoy, undisturbed by the presence of others, the crowd of “ sweet and bitter fancies ” connected with a return, after scenes of bloodshed and conquest, to his home and his motherless child.



I would have given a good deal to escape undiscovered into the wood, but Oscar, who had left me, (I knew not at the time how instinctively,) a good while before, now betrayed by his shrieks of clamorous joy the near approach of the master he loved so fondly. I stood a moment irresolute, but as I was evidently descried by the heir of the mansion, whose hospitality I had so long partaken, I thought there would be unkindness and affectation in avoiding his salutation.

It was frank and soldier-like, as I had been led to expect ; but there was in his manner, as in his manly beauty, a grace and peculiarity for which not even a partial friend, or flattering portrait could altogether prepare me. " Fascinating, bewitching," all the terms usually reserved to express feminine loveliness, would suggest themselves when gazing for the first time on Roderick Falconar ; yet one felt ashamed of applying these light and often desecrated terms to aught so pensive, so intellectual and majestic. One glance at this young hero, for such he might really, not figuratively, be called—at the noble compound which, at the early age of thirty, nature, glory, and misfortune had combined to place before me, did more to make me feel what,

alas ! *I* was not,—the disadvantages of a neglected childhood, and restricted youth, and dissipated manhood, than any thing else, aye, than even the open contempt of Pauline, or the delicately veiled compassion of Mrs. Sydney Hume.

While all this was flashing rapidly through my mind, Major Falconar was adverting, with the ease of a man of the world, and the kindness of a Highlander on his own soil, to my visit beneath his father's roof, of which, (and I suspected, from the smile that played over his lip, a good deal besides,) he had been informed by his chief correspondent in the family, Mrs. Sydney Hume. The faithful dog, which still leaped and fawned around him, unconscious of fatigue, served to cover what might be passing in his master's mind, and he said, fondly stroking his favourite's grizzled forehead, “Oscar and I are old fellow-campaigners. He was with me during my first winter in Spain, and I assure you he was a most efficient member of the Commissariat. Few of those gentlemen deserve to retire on a pension half as well as this old cunning one, who (perhaps in virtue of his unquestionable Spanish descent,) had a nose not only for Spanish partridges, but many Spanish things besides, that

was quite wonderful. I laugh yet to think how many buried Bayonne hams, and Estremaduran sausages, and skins of goodly Bucellas, that grey muzzle of his contrived to resuscitate."

"I fear," added he, beginning to move forward, "that your sport for the day is at an end, if Oscar, as I suspect, is your only coadjutor; I doubt all the partridges in Christendom would not lure him from an old friend's side to-day." I assured him with great truth, that I was returning home when I met him, and had thus no pretext for declining his polite proposal that we should do so together, though I would again have given worlds for escape, when I heard screams of infantine delight, almost imitating the clamorous greetings of Oscar, and saw, running down the approach, where she had met her father's carriage, the transported little Flora.

"Papa! papa!" was all she could say, and that only at long intervals, between the thousand rapturous kisses which, in the exuberance of her delight, she bestowed upon her father's face, and hands, and clothes, and finally on their mutual friend Oscar, who stood looking on, not very sure whether he should be pleased or no, to be thus superseded by a younger favourite.

I kept as much aloof as I could, yet I felt that my involuntary presence must be a restraint on feelings, which, suppressed as they were by soldier modesty and firmness, shook the erect frame of the young father, like a tall pine in the blast. He recovered himself, however, for there was far more of joy than of sorrow in the meeting, and I do not remember being more elated by any token of female approbation, (except perhaps the proposal to elope with Mrs Sydney Hume,) than when Flora, some ten minutes after I had walked at her side unobserved, turned round and said, "I've a hand for you too, Mr. Neddy. Papa, Edmund Meredith and I are great friends."

"I hope he and I will be so too, Flora," said her father courteously, "and not the less speedily on my part, for your artless confession. I am afraid, Mr. Meredith, there is coquetry in a Highland nursery, as well as a town ball-room, though it is not quite so skilfully veiled. And now, tell me, one or both of you, how is my dear father?"

"Oh, grandpapa is better than well. Ever since he heard you were coming, he has rode out every day himself with the dogs, and had all the guns in the hall taken down and cleaned, and a fire in the

library, and the blue room all new furnished, and," here the child stopped suddenly, and looked down, and grew first red and then pale. "And what? my little darling," said her father, stopping and bending over her. "Mamma's picture cleaned and new-framed," said Flora reluctantly, with all the instinct which teaches even an infant mind what chord it has unconsciously made vibrate. "That was very kind of grandpapa," answered her father, in an altered voice, and after a moment's effort, to cover which he resumed his inquiries.

"And aunt Annie, I hope she is in her usual good health and spirits." "Oh! aunt Annie has been all in a bustle too. Hen Tibbie says, 'she was never so ill to please in chickens and turkey poults as since the young laird was looked for, though I am sure,' says she, 'if eating gowd would mak them better for his bonnie mou, they sudna want it frac Tibbie.'"

To escape from these complimentary effusions of clannish affection, the Major now turned to me—"It is to you I believe I should apply for the most satisfactory information about our dear Mrs. Sydney; at least if one lover may expect truth from another on the object of their mutual flame.—Is

she not indeed a delightful person?" About the most delightful in the world, Major," said I, "and if you knew what erroneous impressions I had formed of women of her age, you would rate the confession higher. I am divided between her and Flora," said I playfully, "and might sing, 'how happy could I be with either;' but, seriously, our inestimable friend is, like all the rest of the family, absolutely revived by your approach. If she goes on as she is doing at present, she will soon have the activity, as well as vivacity of fifteen."

"But, Mr. Neddy," cried Flora, stopping short, and looking archly in my face, "why don't you say something about dear Alice Moray? I'm sure you speak enough to her—you have not played half so much with me since she came." I felt myself blush at the little fairy's inuendo, and when I looked up and detected passing rapidly from Major Falconar's face, just such an expression as might flash across a proud Highland kinsman's brow at the thought of a *mesalliance* between his cousin and a southron, I hastened to remove it by saying, with as much calmness of manner as I could assume, "So you are jealous, Flora, are you? of Miss Moray. You may settle it all between

you when I am gone, for you know I am going on Friday. Indeed," added I, turning as if apology were necessary, to the Major, " but for the pleasure of making your acquaintance, I should have left the Glen before now."

" I am very sorry to hear it," answered Roderick, with all the imperceptible shade of added frankness which the relief from suspicion inspired ; " I hope you will be induced to think twice of it, and to do, what from long absence I shall much require, the honours of its moors and waters to their truant heir-apparent. I am told you fish already to the astonishment of Neil M'Vicar and mortification of aunt Annic." This proof of how minute were the details conveyed by Mrs. Sydney, made me blush, I believe, once more ; and I was not sorry when we came in sight of the house, to have the attention of all its inmates engrossed by another and newer object.

Major Falconar had a battery of a novel nature to make up to, for in the portico before the house (added in a fit of gallantry by the laird that his favourite Mrs. Sydney might step dry-shod upon his threshold) stood a formidable array of ancient domestics ; from the stiff old butler, (a sort

of double, and spurious edition of his master) who stood in unblushing pomposity in the foreground, supported by the no less privileged John Newborough, and true, though demure, daughter of Eve, Alice Pinnock—to the shrinking and giggling maids and footboys peeping over their shoulders ; with hen Tibbie, and other sovereigns of remote colonial dependencies, filling up the third-rank of the phalanx. I question whether a hollow square of Bonaparte's best old guard would have made the bold dragoon pull up so decidedly, as the sight of this formidable battalion of household troops. But there was nothing for it in either case but to advance ; and Roderick did it with the best grace in the world.

“ Steenie, how goes it with you ? is the old vintage 4 in good order yet ? ” was his characteristic salutation to the butler. “ John Newborough, you wear like your mistress ; and you, Mrs. Alice, I hear, keep her as well as we could all wish. I'm glad to see you 'all again, my good lasses. I've seen no sight as bonny since I left you ; and as for you, Tibbie, (singling out the astonished and overwhelmed poultry-woman, who looked as a young lady in the tremor of her presentation might be sup-

posed to do, were she individually addressed by his majesty,) I've a crow to pluck with you for something Flora has been telling me. However, to make all right between us, there's a breed of true Spanish hens on their way to the glen, and Mrs. Sydney need never want a new-laid egg for her supper again."—The crowd made way respectfully, with many whispered blessings on the young laird and his little Flora, who kept fast hold of his hand, as if afraid to let him out of her sight.

At the door of the library, a delightful room on the second floor, a favourite with Roderick, and always inhabited when he was at home, stood his old stately father, who having dressed for dinner a full hour sooner than usual in pure impatience for his son's arrival, had all the air of being in gala on purpose to receive him. Both tried to speak, but felt there was no occasion. Roderick hid his face a moment longer than necessary on his father's stalwart shoulder, and the laird blew his nose soon after, perhaps accidentally. "Grandpapa," exclaimed Flora, springing up in his arms without quitting her grasp of Roderick, "I've won my ten kisses! I saw papa first!" "And we thought ye had kept him all to yourself, you cutty," said aunt Annie,

playfully pushing away her darling, "time about's fair play, as I hear you say at Birkie with your friend Mr. Meredith—so here goes;" and with burlesque solemnity and real emotion, perhaps not the least real in the party—the old lady gave her nephew a hearty kiss.

"Last not least, I hope is your motto my *preux chevalier*," said Mrs. Sydney, advancing in the same mock-heroic strain; but it would not do, Roderick's soft subdued smile went ever too near her heart for pleasantry, and murmuring almost inaudibly—"God bless you, my son!" she embraced him in her turn.

I was standing very quietly by, feeling myself as much *de trop* as a poor bridesman at a wedding, or a friend on a wedding excursion, or any such superfluous personage, when a diversion was made in my favour by another, who had evidently waited to give dearer claims precedence, before she joined in the tide of congratulation. It was Alice Moray, who now appeared at the door, and playfully exclaiming, "Is it come to a cousin's turn yet?" advanced with her usual graceful frankness into the room. Roderick, who had left her a mere child—not many years older in reality, and still fewer in his

eyes, than his Flora now numbered,—was manifestly quite unprepared for the metamorphosis a few short years had effected. His first impulse, as the little head he had so often patted was put in at the-door, had obviously been to kiss the golden, as he had just done the silver-haired friends of his youth ; but when the whole tall, though sylph-like figure, rose in feminine completeness before him, there seemed a moment's irresolution how far the liberty could be hazarded. To Alice, however, he had been hitherto at all times—and especially perhaps at this moment—a brother, and a brother only ; and there was a conflicting frankness and unaffected sisterly sparkle in her eye, which left him no hesitation. “ My dear cousin,” said he, “ what an additional pleasure it is to meet you here ;” and as he clasped her in a brotherly embrace, methought, but it might be fancy, that the artless blush and unaffected embarrassment the sweet girl could not entirely conceal, had not Roderick Falconar's cousinly courtesy at that moment for their cause.

The blush, from whatever source, was not lost upon Mrs. Sydney, and there was a latent triumph in her eye as she marked the evident surprise and

admiration with which Roderick first looked upon his lovely cousin. It flashed upon me all in a moment, (so quick-sighted had I become by living among quick-witted people,) that to her and all the mutual connexions of this beautiful and meetly assorted couple, their ultimate union had long been an object of steady and affectionate, though not overweening solicitude.

I lingered at Glen Falconar as long as regard to consistency, and the real necessity of preparing for my winter studies would permit. I staid long enough to see—and to see not only without mortification, but with pleasure—that as far as regarded Miss Moray's heart, my going away was now a superfluous sacrifice. But I did not the less carry away with me the approbation of Mrs. Sydney, the restored good-will of aunt Annie, the cordial good wishes of the laird, and the friendship—worth a “wilderness of heiresses,”—of Roderick Falconar.

What my friend Mrs. Sydney had sportively advanced relatively to the latent tastes and capabilities slumbering in my composition, had not proved altogether visionary. As a resource, during the period immediately succeeding my departure from

Glen Falconar, and previous to the opening of college, I took a drawing-master; and owed to the circumstance, if not any degree of even *amateur* proficiency, a discriminating relish for the beauties both of nature and art, which, educated as I had been in utter estrangement from both, was like the acquisition of a new sense. I accompanied the master (a modest and intelligent young man) in his sketching rambles in the environs of his picturesquely situated native city, and soon learned that the boasted first *coup d' œil* of Edinburgh is but the concentrated effect of a thousand happily grouped, though infinitely varied beauties.

As more serious studies superseded lighter pursuits, these excursions necessarily ceased; but I had acquired from them a source of harmless future amusement, and the habit of lounging in a certain printseller's shop, where the popular productions of the day were always sure to be met with.

One Saturday late in Autumn, when the weather was uninviting for exercise, while yet circumstances had obliged me to go abroad, I took refuge from a shower in the shop before mentioned; and my eye immediately rested on a recent addition to its attractions in the shape of some freely designed yet

exquisitely finished views in body colour, in a style too difficult to be often successful, and which I have seldom seen attempted, except by artists of Venice and Naples.

These were scenes in Spain, and as the names were familiar to me as connected with the exploits of our troops, and consequently of Major Falconar, it occurred to me they might be acceptable on that account to Mrs. Sydney, a small boudoir in whose mansion was already nearly clothed with similar memorials of places or persons dear to her. I asked the price, which was, as I expected, considerable; but I paid it cheerfully, only inquiring (as the set was apparently imperfect from detached purchases,) of the printseller, if he thought he could procure me one or two more by the same hand, to complete it. This he readily undertook, and I went away, well satisfied with my bargain.

Two or three weeks after, I returned to ask for my drawings, which were presented to me; but there was so manifest an inferiority in the execution—though not the conception of them, that I could not forbear remarking it, in a tone of considerable disappointment. A slight noise in another part of the shop (which I had thought empty)

called my attention to a feeble and emaciated, though gentlemanlike person, who, as it were almost involuntary replying to my strictures—"allowance must be made for rapidly increasing illness,"—left the shop before I could recover from my surprise and confusion ; though not before I had caught such a glimpse of his face and figure as might enable me to recognise them.

" Good heaven !" exclaimed I, much concerned, " I fear I have unintentionally wounded the feelings of an unfortunate individual, and one too who has seen far better days. I hope you will put it in my power to redeem the error by any possible means. More than mere politeness seems called for by the circumstances of the case."

" That I neither can nor will deny, sir," replied the dealer in *vertù*, " but I believe death would be preferred by the gentleman who has just left us, to any relief procured by a breach of confidence on my part, which the most sacred promises render impossible."

" How unlucky," said I, " that from what previously passed, he is aware of the price stipulated between us for the drawings ; else we might easily have doubled it without exciting suspicion, there

being no positive standard by which to estimate works of fancy. But could *you* not be the instrument of conveying, in some delicate manner, the pecuniary assistance so much required by the poor invalid ?”

“That is out of the question, sir—except (after a little consideration) you incline to risk the payment in advance of a few more drawings, which the poor artist will never live to complete, but which may answer your benevolent designs.”—“Oh ! by all means,” said I, anxious to get rid so cheaply of the irksome sense of harshness which my hasty comments had left on my mind. “His residence is I presume known to you,” added I, as I laid down the money on the counter. “It is not, sir,” answered he ; “but I have no doubt of his soon calling to replace the drawings thus advantageously disposed of ; besides, his lively interest in the success of our arms, makes my newspaper a great attraction.”

“An invalid officer !” sighed I, more and more vexed at my rash critiques. “I have little doubt of it, sir,” replied the printseller, “but not recently in the service. He speaks of his illness as of long standing, and this I suppose occasions

his distress.”—“Is he married?” asked I; do you ever see any family?” “Once only, a respectable female, too old for his wife, I should say probably an elder sister, or maiden aunt, called to inquire about the fate of some drawings. They were then unsold; but her interest in the result was so obvious, that I suppressed the fact, and took my chance of their selling, as they soon did, sir, to you. The old lady—for such, notwithstanding her simple dress, she seemed—was as reserved as the gentleman, and I never saw her again.”

With this slight information I was obliged to content myself, and walked disconsolately out of the shop. The unknown, I learned some days afterwards, continued to come there, when increasing infirmity permitted, but always at an hour when he knew it was sure to be unfrequented. Besides, had I even succeeded in intruding myself on his acquaintance, I felt the little probability of inducing him to accept any thing beyond the ample apology I had already conveyed through the master of the shop; so I gave one sigh to the romance of the affair, and another to its sad reality, and for a while forgot it amid new pursuits and acquaintances.

Mrs. Sydney received my little present with her usual warm-hearted frankness. "I like your drawings, Mr. Meredith," said she; "and I like your attention better still. You shall hang them yourself among neighbours not to be ashamed of, I assure you. These wild Sierras and their picturesque Muleteers and Guerrillas, will be in excellent keeping with yonder Bulgarian hovels, and their turbaned Turks, among whom my poor brother was only preserved by our constitutional good-humour from realising the fate of

' Jean Rost-bif, Ecuyer,
Qui se pendit pour se desennuyer.'

And look ! there is the well-known bridge of Glen Falconar, and, (lowering her voice,) the family chapel of another dear abode of my youth, rich in departed worth. Why, you are selecting the lights *à merveille*, for an ignoramus ! Confess, you have been studying under a limner since we parted."

"Did I not mention the circumstance before?" said I, in all the confusion of *mauvaise honte*, "You said one might be a heaven-born artist without knowing it, so I resolved to make the

trial ; and its result has been that I know which side of a picture the light falls on." " It is more than many do," said my old friend playfully, " and therefore *tant gagné* ; but I daresay you have gained something besides." " I once hoped I might have gained a friend, or at least the opportunity of doing some good, but I failed, perhaps by my own rash levity ;" and I told her the adventure of the unknown artist.

" Well," said she, after a pause, evidently of regret ; " you have perhaps made another acquisition, in more tenderness for the possible feelings of by-standers. You will never criticise unmercifully again, for fear the ghost of the unknown should be looking over your shoulder."

I got in the course of the next few weeks my bespoken drawings, but bearing still more legibly than the former the impress of disease and decay. " The poor gentleman has exerted himself to finish them, as they were paid for," said the printseller ; " but informs me that no more need be expected, as he is much too ill." So saying, he handed me a brief note, in an easy though trembling character, from which nothing could be gathered but

that the hand of death was on the writer. Leaving a trifle in the hands of the worthy dealer, in case accident should put it in his power to convey it, I gave up the matter in despair.

CHAPTER XII.

Jack's alive!

ANONYMOUS.

My winter in Edinburgh passed away most pleasantly between the liberal studies which I there saw daily pursued by men maturer in years than myself, and the boundless hospitality for which the metropolis of the north has ever been distinguished. Its society, I am told, has since become more extensive and miscellaneous,—but at the time I write of, one good introduction—a less potent one by far than the universal passport of Mrs. Sydney Hume's countenance, sufficed to unlock to a young stranger, at all *comme il faut*, alike the mansions and hearts of its kindly citizens.

Such is the round of incessant hospitality which winter brings in its train, that I might, if disposed to profit by it, have “sat at good men’s feasts” every day of the week. But I was a *bona fide*, though desultory student, and I limited my enjoyments chiefly to such as promised to combine utility with amusement.

The distinguished trio I had been introduced to at Mrs. Sydney’s, proved themselves men of deeds, not words only. At the poet’s privileged board I met a *piquant* class of men nearly unknown, I believe, in the south, who contrive to unite in amicable compact the seemingly discordant pursuits of law and literature. At the physician’s I learnt how agreeably and profitably science can unbend, and philosophy insinuate herself under the guise of table-talk, while beneath my amiable temporary pastor’s roof were domiciliated a few young Englishmen, like myself, of independent fortune, but differing from me, alas ! in having laid elsewhere the foundation of an excellent education, on which they were now merely rearing a superstructure of more varied and liberal pursuits. In these I found both practical advisers by what method lost time might best be compensated, and most benefit be de-

rived from my tardy matriculation, and companions towards whom I was naturally attracted by similarity of country and situation. When I compared, or rather contrasted, these manly, spirited, but rational and intelligent youths, with the coadjutors of my earlier follies, I could scarce believe that they were denizens of the same England, endowed with the same faculties, and born to the same responsibilities.

The gaiety of Edinburgh, properly so called, was then, as I believe it still is, chiefly confined to a short fitful fever of a few weeks, the madness and intensity of which I could not help fancifully ascribing to its being probably (like many other legacies of France to Scotland) a relic of the Catholic carnival. In its vortex, I had sagely half resolved not to entangle myself, when, fortunately perhaps for my consistency, I had an excuse for so doing, as a Squire of Dames, in a quarter where my poor services were equally matter of duty and inclination.

To partake for the first time in her life in the brief revel—to see and be seen by her countrymen, as befitted one so endowed by nature and fortune, Alice Moray, (a year earlier then had originally

been intended) came to town ; and though chaperoned in public by a widow lady of rank, her near relation, resided under the roof of Mrs. Sydney Hume.

For reasons honourable to all parties, the heiress of Moray Castle made her debut unattended by any member of the Glen Falconar family. The old laird and Miss Annie rarely, if ever, quitted the country ; and Roderick, whom business connected with his retirement on half-pay had detained vexatiously in London, was too happy to indemnify himself by the society of his father and child, as well as too proud and delicate to fetter, by any public devotion of his own, his fair cousin's *entrée* on a scene where she had only to appear to be admired and appreciated.

“ Alice, I suspect,” said Mrs. Sydney, when announcing to me her expected arrival, “ has not lived some months in the house with Roderick Falconar to have eyes or ears for any one else ; but he and his are determined she shall have the ‘ fair field’ of the three kingdoms, and, and ‘ no favour,’ ere a single word of even implied devotion crosses the lips of one who, could he suppose himself indebted for her partiality to youth or inexperience, and not her deliberate choice, with ‘ all the world

before her where to choose,' would whistle down the wind without a sigh the romantic demesne of Castle Moray, nay even the charms (of which, poor fellow, he is becoming but too sensible) of its lovely owner."

Alice, who never having suspected anything warmer than friendship in her feelings towards me, had no awkward transition to make, met me with the same cordial and bewitching frankness as ever; and I was richly repaid for my sacrifice of a momentary dream of ambition, when Mrs. Sydney (to supply the lack of any such useful member in Lady Mary G——'s family) bespoke, and with unhesitating confidence, my *devoirs* as the escort and *cavaliere* in public of Miss Moray.

"Your previous acquaintance at Glen Falconar," said she, "and intimacy with myself, will make the thing quite obvious and natural, and my Elsie will want a disinterested old friend to shield her a little from the press of inconvenient and perhaps undesirable admirers, and see her safe to her chair, and into the hands of that doughty celt, Archy M'Gillivray, under whose auspices she may defy all the ravishers of romance, with Sir Hargrave Pollexfen at their head. Only think of *your* enacting

the part of Grandison, Edmund, and on my responsibility !" added my old friend, playfully. " Do you think *our* Miss Byron will resist that ? all cold and provoking as she is, like her too perfect namesake ?" I shook my head, and yet there lurked always some encouragement under Mrs. Sydney's raillery—and when did a lover ever want excuse for hope ?

That the heiress of Castle Moray, rich in charms as in thousands, was admired and courted, and by countrymen to whom she might have listened without derogation, it is almost needless to say. But she did not listen, for her " heart," (like the heroine's of the old Scottish ballad she sung so sweetly) was " in the Highlands ;" and I saw her depart for London, to be presented at court, and become the cynosure of all eyes, in a more dazzling circle, without one throb of anxiety for the silent and dignified pretensions of her absent cousin. But I have been unconsciously anticipating, and must return to an adventure more nearly concerning myself.

It is of a nature so uncommon and melo-dramatic, that unless the reader good-naturedly proceeds on a principle long since adopted by myself, viz. that of setting down for facts all circumstances in a

narrative too improbable for fiction, I don't see how I can expect to be believed. I am not, however, the less worthy of credit, and could appeal to living witnesses, aye, I am happy to say, to the still surviving hero, (for such he certainly must be considered) of the most marvellous of all my *rencontres*. To one of these I have been indebted, under Providence, for education, to another for wealth, but to none perhaps did I ever owe so much of heartfelt satisfaction and purely pleasurable emotion, as the one I am about to narrate.

The last summer I passed at the seaside with Mrs. Meredith, had been rescued from utter insipidity by the delightful though brief companionship of a fine sailor boy of my own age, who was passing under the roof of affectionate parents in the adjoining villa to our's, a hard-earned holiday of intense enjoyment ; differing as widely from the joyless monotony of mine, as the ardent excitement of his spirit-stirring profession did from the regulated tenor of any school exercises with Mr. Maude. Had Charles Saxby remained another month at home, its close might have seen me a disinherited midshipman ; for it needed only the force of daily contrast, and daily association with a being so fear-

less and so happy, to stimulate to escape, one to whom a floating prison seemed comparative liberty.

But Charles, who knew better than myself of what stuff sailors ought to be made, and how unfit one taken from the lap of indulgence, if not luxury, is to "rock with the seaboy on the giddy mast," would never give me even the usual quantum of schoolboy encouragement. "You're too old and soft to go to sea now, Ned," he would say, with a good-natured laugh at my landsman's enthusiasm, "and too fond of Latin by half, to make a sailor. Besides, it is not for a grandmamma's pet like you, with a plum or two just ready to drop into your mouth, to be roughing it in all weathers, and taking your chance of shot and shipwreck. Leave all that to a poor devil of a sixth son like me, with neither room nor prog for him at home, nor chance of a sixpence but what he may persuade a Frenchman to hand over by the soft eloquence of a broadside. Stay snugly ashore, Ned, and don't be doing any thing foolish; and when I am a yellow admiral with a wooden leg, and not much cash in the locker, I'll come and stay a month with you, and make a sailor of your sixth son, if you'll let me."

It is seldom that predictions thus made in sport,

are realized in earnest ; and rarer still when the realization far exceeds in brightness the anticipations of fancy. When I next saw Charles Saxby, he was not a yellow admiral, not a superannuated veteran, richer in laurels than in limbs ; but that perhaps most enviable of human beings, a recently appointed Post Captain ; as happy as promotion and the possession of a tight little frigate can make a joyous sailor of six and twenty. If anything could add to this brimming cup of happiness, it was the stumbling one day, while stationed with a small squadron in Leith Roads, upon his ancient, partly-despised, partly envied playfellow, Ned Meredith. Our meeting was a truly cordial one. If both were altered, it was I hope not for the worse. What I had lost in effeminacy, Charles had gained in polish ; and when he made me the true professional compliment, that I looked as much of a man as if I had spent all my life at sea, I might have answered with equal sincerity, that he could not have been more of a gentleman had his been passed in a court.

We met of course very often. My Saturdays, the only days of absolute idleness I indulged in, were spent chiefly in Charles's society ; and if any-

thing detained him beyond our usual hour of rendezvous for a country ramble, I used frequently to stroll down the broad avenue leading from the northern metropolis to its port, in quest of my tardy comrade.

In so doing, I necessarily often passed under the lofty wall of a botanical garden which skirted the road, of whose sheltering and sunny influence, various privileged beggars availed themselves to take up their daily, and I believe inalienable stations. Most of these were too manifestly practised speculators on human sympathy, to be very successful in awaking it, too clamorous for real distress, and too importunate to excite any feeling more amiable than annoyance; but the still, composed, almost dignified picture of a lame sailor, who, contenting himself with the silent eloquence of his mutilated limb, rarely appealed in words to the passengers' charity, acted powerfully on a heart which must have been made of iron, not to warm at sight of aught that could bring Jack Nerton once more before my mind's eye.

That honest preserver of my childhood, I had reason to think had long since fallen a sacrifice to the chances of his perilous profession; for when,

on first succeeding to my grandmother's fortune, I had sought and visited Kate, (to whom in lieu of an annual donation, a legacy had been bequeathed by Mrs. Meredith,) I found the warm-hearted creature giving way to deep despondence, under that probability rather than certitude of widowhood, which is frequently all that a sailor's wife can gather of a hopeless bereavement. It was the suspense and anxiety which, robust as she was in mind as well as body, I believe killed her. Friends, kindness—and she had both—money, and I supplied her every wish; even her children, who though dispersed, still survived and were dutiful, could not make up to an affectionate heart for the five long years during which no tidings had been heard of Jack.

His probable impressment, (for he was an old man-of-war's man,) and detention in a French prison, was the usual topic of encouragement made use of by all around her; but there was scarce one of those receptacles of misery Kate's restless energies had not managed somehow or other to get explored; and the result of all the "hope deferred," to which every fresh inquiry gave a death-blow, was at length a broken spirit, and a broken

heart. She was buried about two years before I came to Scotland—and, tell it not in Gath ! I never breathed over the splendid monument erected by duty to her to whom I owed thousands—a sigh half so sad and tender, as rose unbidden from the heart's depths, as I gazed on the green turf that lay on the once warm bosom of Mammy Norton.

Jack himself, I had only seen once since he saved my life ; and our brief sojourn together under his roof, (for he went to sea again long ere I quitted its shelter,) rendered my recollections of him very vague and imperfect. I only dimly remembered a frame of iron, and a complexion bronzed by the winds of all climates, from the pole to the equator. But there was a smile of almost childish *naïveté* always lurking around the honest tar's lips, and a latent sparkle of easily awakened kindness in his eye, which I could not forget, and would have given worlds to recognise.

For the sake of these and similar associations, I had repeatedly thrown into the hat of the silent old sailor mendicant my willing mite ; and one day when want of small coin obliged me to depart from my custom, I felt as it were in duty bound to atone for the apparent churlishness—to myself, if not to

the uncomplaining suppliant, by promising to repair the omission on my return.

I provided myself with the needful at a stall while lingering on the quay, awaiting the tardy progress of Saxby's stout pinnace against an adverse tide and a sharp Scottish equinoctial gale ; but it was not till we had proceeded some way towards town, that finding myself mechanically accompanying Charles along the opposite side of the way from my pet beggar's station, I begged him to cross with me that I might redeem my promise.

Saxby was a good-natured fellow, but a sailor is always in a hurry ; and he would rather have thrown his purse at once to the beggar, than have lost in his service a fraction of either his way or his precious time. With expressions bordering more nearly than usual on nautical licence, he reluctantly allowed himself to be dragged across the wide causeway, and the sight of the garb and apparent profession of my protégé, instead of softening or interesting him, as I had supposed most natural, seemed doubly to annoy and exasperate him. " Hang the fellow !" exclaimed he, " it is too bad to make a blue jacket and a cork leg a cloak for humbugging a parcel of landsmen, as those *soi-*

disant sailors eternally do ! He's no more a seaman than you are, Ned, depend upon it."

" I wish you would ascertain it by talking a little to him," said I, half ashamed of my credulity ;
" you would detect an impostor at once."

" No, hang it," cried Saxby, with rising professional choler, " 'tis not worth my pains. I suppose I've cross-questioned some scores in my time, and I never found a true tar among them but one ; and that was a little shabby fellow, who, but for his indubitable gally lingo, and being up to trap on every point I tried to puzzle him with, might have passed for a cockney tailor. That old hull yonder, for as weather-beaten as it looks, is but a fresh water craft, I warrant, like all the rest of them."

" Just ask him one or two sea-questions, Charles, to please me, and convince me at the same time, if the matter is as you suppose."

As my comrade reluctantly advanced to comply, a slight but striking circumstance corroborated my opinion of the veteran's orthodoxy, and staggered Charles's. At the sight of an officer in full uniform, there was not only a mechanical readiness of salute in the trembling hand which sought his uncovered time-bleached head, but a sparkle in the dim eye,

and flush on the hollow cheek, which spoke one sailor's heart warming to another.

"How fares it with you, mess-mate?" cried my young friend, in a tone involuntarily more frank than he intended—"badly enough it would appear, from your taking to the begging line in your old age?"

"Better to beg than steal, Captain—or starve," added the old man, in a more subdued tone, glancing as if in a melancholy yet complacent contrast on the proud martial figure of his youthful successor on the billows.

"No disabled seaman need do either, I trust, in this happy country," returned the again sceptical inquirer; "that leg entitles you to Greenwich of course."

"I wish it did, Sir," replied the old man calmly, "as much for the honour of the thing as the money, though that would be welcome too, God knows. But though I served the king more years, first and last, than many, who are snug with a good out-pension, it was not in a king's ship I lost my precious limb; and I never heard of owners that cared for an old foretop-man, when a flaw in his timbers had laid him up in dock. I've gone through as

many hardships in my time as my neighbours. I've been frost-bit in Greenland, and broiled on the coast of Africa, and near made shark's meat in the West Indies ; but hang me, if I would'nt almost rather have gone to them at once, than lain rotting five years in that devil's anchorage, the French prison of D——."

" Were you in prison in France ?" asked I eagerly—thoughts of poor Jack, and Kate's cruel anxieties rushing on my mind. " Yes, Sir," answered the old sailor, every muscle of his face quivering with strong emotion, " and may the Lord preserve you from ever seeing the inside of such an infernal hole. And the unchristened wretches of Frenchmen ! the chance of war, and all that's fair enough ; but who, except Buonaparte, ever thought of keeping the crews of a parcel of harmless merchantmen half a score years from their wives and families, till the one were gone to their long home, and the other come to worse ends may be—and all because he had neither bowels nor conscience ? It was trying to escape, with some others, over the high ramparts of their confounded fort of D——, that I broke my thigh-bone, and lay long for dead ; and there I might have lain, like

live lumber as I was, but for the Christian kindness and fellow-feeling for an old foretop-man of half a score of boys of middys—God bless them—the eldest of the gang but a trifle above sixteen, who, though hard enough put to it to save themselves, scorned to sheer off and leave an old mess-mate disabled on a lee shore. These fine fellows, gentlemen every inch of them, (the one on whose back I rode oftenest was son to a lord) lugged poor lame Jack along, skulking in the woods all day, and scrimmaging about for rations in the dark at the risk of their lives, a matter of nine weeks, till we made the coast at last, and had enough ado to persuade a parleyvouing lubber of a Frenchman to run us aboard of an English cruiser, for there was not a stiver among us to open his heart with beforehand.

“ When we came under the bows of the frigate, I was the first, lame leg and all, to crawl up the side ; for the youngers were ashamed to be seen in their rags and dirt, and I was sure no one but myself could tell the story enough to their honour. Odd, Captain, I only wish I had that old hat there as full of halfpence, as the French skipper’s was of

bright yellow pictures of his Majesty before I had half done speaking ; and hang me if I knew whether the dear boys looked queerer in their own worn tatters, or the gay coats and waistcoats made for the captain and lieutenants, that hung about them like so many bags. “ And had you no share of all that was going ? ” “ Aye, captain, that had I ; I got rigged from head to heel, and got all I wanted, which was a trifle to carry me home. But home was no home to me.”

“ Had you no family left to take care of you ? ” asked I. “ I should have two boys, please God, somewhere on the face of the earth, or the sea rather, for they’re both sailors—and a girl following a soldier husband in Canada, Halifax, or some such out of the way place ; but the French prison killed my poor wife as outright as if she had been in it instead of me. The unchristian wretches never took the trouble to forward a poor devil’s letter like me, (though when rich officers wrote home for cash, no post could be surer) and the woman that I never saw down-hearted but once, and that was when I was shipwrecked this time twenty years, died, they tell me, of a broken heart.”

“ Shipwrecked ! were you ?” echoed Captain Saxby, half relapsing into scepticism at this favourite cant word of impostors—“ in a king’s ship ?”

“ No, please your honour,” answered the old man, with a sly smile on his weather-beaten face, “ I never had the luck to be lost outright in one of them, though they’ve an ugly trick of going to pieces when they strike, just like any other craft. It was a merchant brig from America that made the desperate bad job of it I mean, and a sad bungling business it was. The master had too many grey hairs in his head not to have known mares’ tails in the sky when he saw them, and if he hadn’t gone to Davy Jones, it must have gone hard with him elsewhere. But he took every soul on board with him, that was the worst of it ; all but myself, and that was no thanks to him.”

“ All on board ?” echoed I, breathless with indefinable emotion, “ did all perish, said you ?” “ All but a slip of a boy that his poor mother threw me to look after. I daresay it was for the innocent’s sake he had a lull, and got safe ashore.”

“ And what became of him ?” asked Charles, who saw me choking with an inquiry which words would not have enabled me to utter. “ He grew

a fine handsome gentlemen, I've heard poor Kate say many a time and oft, and let her want for nothing when I was at sea. I'd have given a month's pay to see the creature that rocked a long March night on a hencoop beside me, and ate out of the same porringer with the little ones, till his grand friends came and fetched him away; but I was so seldom ashore, I could never fall in with him, and I shouldn't know him if he stood before me."

"Is this at all like him, Jack, think you?" asked Charles, grasping me firmly by the arm, (no unwelcome support), and turning my averted face towards the sailor. "Jack!" exclaimed the old man, quite bewildered, "that's my name sure enough, but how came you to know it?"

"And you're Jack Norton, too, are you not?" cried I, finding breath at last, "kind, honest Jack Norton, that I owe my life to, and whose latter days it shall be the business of mine to make comfortable."

"Aye, aye, you have it all pat between ye," murmured the veteran disjointedly—"but which of you young gentlemen is the child that sat on Kate's knee, and lay in her bosom? It's not you, Captain, I know now, for they wouldn't let my boy go

to sea, I remember ; but they've made a man of him any how, and God in heaven bless him, and make me thankful I've lived to see this day."

A thoroughfare, though at this early hour little frequented, was no place for scenes, and we soon^d adjourned our's (for want of a tavern within reach) to an adjoining stone-cutter's yard ; where, surrounded by costly monuments to gratitude not half so sincere and solidly founded as mine, I was able to pour out unrestrained, my long defrauded feelings towards the preserver of my existence.

If any thing could have added to the singularity of this recognition, it was its occurring under the auspices of the unpropitious and incredulous Saxby ; the more so, as his sudden substitution on the station for an old Captain of Jack's (in quest of whose patronage and good offices the poor homeless wanderer had come to Scotland,) proved in the first instance a complete damper to the old man's slender worldly prospects. That Jack begged no more from that day, it were superfluous to mention, as well as that Charles Saxby henceforward, always gave beggars in blue jackets the benefit at least of a court of inquiry.

I got Mrs. Sydney, whose natural love of sailors

was quickened by a weak side, (the wisest will have one,) in favour of all the mendicant order—to procure for Jack's evening of life a comfort far beyond silver or gold ; in the discharge from service of the husband of his only daughter, (a second Kate in kindness as well as name,) and a chair for the veteran's latter days at the fireside of a son-in-law, who made shoes none the worse, and told stories all the better, for having during seven years of an eventful life made campaigns in all quarters of the globe.

This incident, it may be believed, contributed to endear Scotland still farther to one, whose affections as well as tastes and feelings had there been so delightfully called into exercise. To me, there had always been as much of the romantic in Scottish life, as in Scottish scenery. Not only had I been transformed, by spells of unimagined potency, from an *ennuyé* into an enthusiast ; but events partaking little less of the nature of magic, were destined to succeed each other with a rapidity which makes the portion of my life passed in Edinburgh, when looked back on, stand out from the level realities of former and subsequent existence, like the *Fata Morgana* structures of some gorgeous, but rapidly shifting dream.

CHAPTER XIII.

And still to love, though prest with ill
'Mid wintry age, to feel no chill
With me, is to be lovely still.
My Mary !

COWPER.

I WAS returning one peculiarly dark and foggy afternoon from a late class at the college, and making my way slowly along the Bond Street of Edinburgh, the South Bridge, (whose gay shops and their rich frequenters, thus oddly perched above their squalid fellow-mortals in the Cowgate, afford no bad illustration of the difference in their relative moral position,) when the peculiar sound with which a stay in London had rendered me too familiar, of fire engines, and a rush of people towards

the High Street, made me quicken my pace, and take the same direction.

It was some time ere I could obtain any precise information on the site of a conflagration, all were taking, like myself, upon trust. At length, as I turned the corner of Hunter's Square, I ran full upon an old woman, the only individual among hundreds, who was going quietly in an opposite direction, and sufficiently calm, amid universal excitement, to give me an answer, which nothing short of a residence of some months in Scotland could have rendered intelligible to an Englishman. "The fire's in the second *land* (meaning thereby a tenement of some fourteen stories, more or less,) in Conolly's Close."

To those who have never seen Edinburgh, or a town similarly constructed, a *close* would convey the idea of a neat paved court, possibly graced with a few venerable trees, and snug-looking antiquated houses, reposing under the shadow of some time-honoured cathedral, and inhabited by grave prebendaries and their quiet households. But in Edinburgh—that is the town of history and romance, the town of the James's and Maries—a

close means a narrow lane, whose inhabitants may almost shake hands across it from the windows of some dozen stories; some of whose buildings, maugre their *baronial* antiquity, still frown in a massy strength that may defy centuries, and others again, less solidly constructed, are evidently nodding to their fall; yet, while their crazy wooden projections have long since menaced passengers with destruction, peopled like an ant-hill to their airy summits, with busy though necessitous human beings.

It was in a close thus constructed that the fire was now raging, and those who may happen to have witnessed the far more extensive conflagrations which I am told have since ravaged that noble High Street, in which these alleys terminate, can perhaps alone appreciate the singularly magnificent aspect of the flames, which, curling upwards amid these Patagonian buildings, like the coilings of some giant snake, shed their livid glare of "red gold" on the coroneted crest of the old Cathedral, and made the distant battlements of the Castle loom portentously through wreaths of smoke. I believe the first feelings of every one present were awe and admiration, though

these quickly gave place to active exertion, in which all ranks heartily joined.

It was not an hour when many of the upper classes were in that quarter of the town, but a good many students like myself were drawn by curiosity as well as humanity to the awful scene. The fire seemed to have originated in the second house in the alley from the main street, and as the efforts of the fire engines could only be directed to it over the roofs of those lower down, more personal exertion in getting water conveyed by other means became necessary. While some active enterprising fellows were scrambling, regardless of peril, on roofs and chimnies with the scanty supplies thus obtained, I turned my efforts toward the possible rescue of the inmates of the devoted dwelling, all hopes of the individual preservation of which were soon abandoned.

The stone staircases, universal in Scotland, afford ingress and egress to the last moment that human respiration is possible within the walls, and up these I rushed in all the excitement of youth, and enthusiasm of humanity. Creatures of all ages, in all the varieties of destitution and helplessness, flew past me with the temporary fleetness

of despair. Their dishevelled aspect, their wild features rendered livid by the flames, will not soon pass from my memory ; nor will it ever lose, amid the general horrors of that flight, the pale meek face, and calm though trembling demeanour of a little barefooted girl of twelve or thirteen, who, with a devotion she never deemed heroic, was lingering to assist an aged grandmother, while both were often nearly overwhelmed by the torrent of fugitives this modern Babel continued to disgorge. I saw them safe down the few remaining steps of their course, and then flew to redeem lost time. The little girl called after me (in the same spirit that dictated her previous conduct), “ Oh sir ! the gentleman in the third flat ! ”

A gentleman ! and in such a place ! could I have heard aright ? or did the word mean more than one who exercised no calling ? Even such would surely not live voluntarily here. The door leading from the common stair to *this* third floor apartment was standing open ; had it been closed, this was no time for forms. I rushed forward through a dismal antique kitchen, destitute of every appearance of comfort, into an inner room containing a bed, beside which stood, her hands meekly fold-

ed, her limbs apparently fast stiffening with affright, an elderly woman of the middling class. "Good God !" exclaimed I, "why do you linger here ? there is not a moment to be lost, fly, I intreat you." She was past speaking, but a look directed to the bed, showed me that it held what she would not abandon without force. The flames burst vividly forth upon the opposite wall, else I should scarce have distinguished the emaciated being lying in happy insensibility on the wretched pallet. I snatched him up, (half recoiling with horror and pity at the infant lightness of my burden) enveloped in a blanket, which the trembling hands of his nurse had already instinctively wrapped round her charge ; forced her out of the now blazing and crackling room before me, and happily, though with considerable difficulty, reached the bottom of the stairs.

A shout from the crowd beneath hailed our appearance. "Thank God, they're all out now," cried unfortunate beings, who, amid ruin and desolation, could yet sympathize in the escape of their fellow-wretches. "Have you any friends," said I to the poor trembling woman, (the moving of whose lips in silent prayer alone assured me of her existence,) "to

whose house I can have this sick person carried ?” a lot of Highland porters (among whom I gladly recognised Archy M^cGillivray,) having prepared for similar cases rude litters on their hand-barrows. “ Friends !” at last ejaculated the creature before me, whose frightful emaciation I now perceived was only exceeded by her patient’s ; but it was in a tone so despairingly negative, that I really feared a repetition of the question might annihilate her.

“ The poor man cannot lie in the street,” cried I, and I was forced to exert myself to find him a domicile. “ Run, Archy, across the way there, to that German optician, who sold me the mathematical instruments, you know—and see if he can give a bed on my account to this unhappy person.” “ Aye, he lets lodgings—to the living that is,” muttered Archy to himself, as he hobbled across the street, “ but whether he’ll tak wi’ a corp, is anither matter.”

The German, who, I had reason to know, was too poor to be particular, made no demur ; and to his clean, though humble dwelling, *au quatrième*, I carried my still insensible burden. A small flask of *schnaps* which the house contained, afforded the readiest means of resuscitation ; and no sooner were

a few drops of the unwonted stimulus applied to the poor sick man's lips, than he opened his eyes, looked wildly around, and asked where he was ?

The voice, faint as it was, struck me as not entirely unknown, and the decided English accent, so rarely heard of late, perhaps strengthened the impression. " Oh yes, I remember," said he feebly, and with great effort, as the corruscations of the flames played on the opposite wall, " the house is on fire. Elleanor, save yourself, I entreat, I command you." " We are both saved, God be praised for it ; and this gentleman," said another gentle English voice ; and the poor little woman, at length fairly overcome by a sense of security, hid her face in the curtains, and sobbed aloud. " Let—let me thank the gentleman," said the invalid, trying to raise himself on his elbow, and searching for me with an eye glowing with feverish brightness. I drew near that he might see me ; the flames threw a strong gleam upon his features ; I recognised in them those of the unknown artist, and thanked God my error was at length atoned.

Fortunately the recognition was not then mutual. I tore myself from his muttered blessings and the grateful tears of his nurse, and commending them

both (with *carte blanche* as to expense) to the honest German and his tidy wife, had leisure to find out that I was very tired, my hair and clothes a good deal singed, my head and back aching like a gally-slave's. The fire was by this time exhaling its impotent fury on shapeless ruins, and smouldering beneath dense clouds of Stygian smoke with the malice of a defeated demon. All the excitement of peril was over, and I went home to bed.

Before I was up next morning, Archy was at my bed-side with a note from Mrs. Sydney. "Come to me without fail, immediately," was its tone of peremptory kindness; "heroes are scarce in these degenerate days, and I want to see one; especially one *warranted* by Archy, who is a very Highland oracle in matters of bodily prowess. There is a lady in the case too, by that trusty Mercury's report; perhaps she does not interest me the less for being (in his experienced judgment,) an 'auld lass' like myself."

I obeyed this friendly summons with a good deal of the natural reluctance which even ordinary men feel, at the least approach to *lionship*; but the hopes of interesting Mrs. Sydney in my protégées, got the better of selfish *mauvaise honte*, and I even

stood pretty well the fire of John Newborough's privileged stare and exclamation of "Guide's, sir, ye look as if ye had been at the wars!"

"Come away! knight of the fiery Cross and burning pestle," cried my hostess in her usual sportive manner; but seeing me really annoyed, she added more gravely, "Don't think I suppose you could have *helped* helping these poor creatures. I know it was all mere poodle instinct and not reflection—but still somehow, I am glad it was a dog of mine own breeding, and no one's else."

"And the poor people will have cause to be glad too, dear Mrs. Sydney," said I, "if they owe to the circumstance any share in your kindness and protection. It can hardly, I should think, be better bestowed."

"As far as kitchen, cellar, and purse are concerned," answered she quietly, "I have done my best for them already. Archy is off with his seven-league boots on, under a hamper of the old Malmsey, and the spoils of Betty's larder, while Alice Pinnock, the keeper of my privy purse, like 'panting Time, toils after him in vain,' to inquire into the state of the 'ways and means.' I bade her settle it all, however, with the German hostess, for fear of giv-

ing offence ; and I long to hear the result of a negotiation, carried on in High Dutch and low Edinburgh. Alice will come home, shaking the dust from her feet in pious presbyterian indignation ; for with her, all foreigners are Frenchmen, and to go into the house of such, will cost her a week's fumigation." " Indeed ?" replied I, surprised that bigotry and prejudice could walk unreprieved in the clear mild light of Mrs. Sydney's philanthropy, " I thought she would have learned from you to love all mankind."

There cannot be a stronger proof of my constant forgetfulness, that all the world cannot know (like myself and the extensive circle by whom I beheld her appreciated) this admirable woman, than my not having ere this adverted to her benevolence. This is not, heaven be praised, either a rare or difficult virtue, in female bosoms especially, where the sight of unrelieved distress seldom fails to awaken feelings of genuine pity and sympathy. But Mrs. Sydney's Christian charity took a range so infinitely wider and loftier than that of most female philanthropists, that one might say, without much exaggeration, it only lacked the boundless faculties and means of superior natures to emulate

their activity. In early life I had understood, before fortune smiled upon, or age sanctioned any excursions beyond the mild domestic pale by which the charities of women are usually bounded, Mrs. Sydney's found vent in the most disinterested sacrifices to the health, the happiness, or even convenience of her numerous relations, to whom, in cases of sickness, or sorrow, or perplexity, she proved ever, not a *dernier*, but an immediate resource.

As she advanced in life, her experience (which, be it observed, transcended in value the same commodity when thrust upon weaker minds, as much as the judicious acquisitions of a skilful purchaser exceed the blind bargains of a fool) was as a rich treasury, on which all novices in life might draw unquestioned. It was not ostentatiously waved in triumph over heads too young and simple to be yet similarly defended, though confident enough to revolt from the display ; but gently spread, like the mantle of a benignant fairy, and so thickly strewed with the flowers of kindness and courtesy, that youth was lured unconsciously within its sheltering folds.

Benevolence was the daily business of her life, peace-making might be said to be its luxury. If

there were parents to be reconciled, or children to be soothed into duty ; if a young couple had embarked in a matrimonial adventure with too slender a provision of money or temper, or—more unpromising still—of love, properly so called, Mrs. Sydney was in her element. Grey heirs listened to her from sympathy, youth from mingled awe and affection. When an infant *ménage* was threatened with the simple evil of poverty, her purse was like that of Fortunatus, so much could its judicious aid accomplish. If irritation was to be allayed, she first put both parties in good humour with her and with themselves, and the transition to mutual complacency was seldom distant. If even that idle truant Fancy, after borrowing the smiles and wings of Love, threatened to use the latter to forsake the hearts he had deluded, she could succeed, by spells peculiarly her own, in transforming the penitent recreant into something *better* than even the urchin whose form he had usurped—and ties that seemed too fragile even for Time, she could twine till they grew potent for Eternity.

Rich as she was in all besides, her influence became in later life an inexhaustible mine of happiness to others, and thus of course to herself. There

was an "open sesame" in her unpremeditated eloquence which often astonished herself, by the facility with which it gave her access to the rigidly guarded sanctuary of office. Descended from a father distinguished in public life, and inheriting, with the chief features of his lofty character, a whole host of hereditary friendships, she had never neglected a legitimate opportunity of pursuing or improving the legacy ; and she was one who protested, on the sure ground of daily experience, against sweeping assertions of the selfishness, ingratitude or discourtesy of statesmen. "No one knows," she used to say, "who has not tried, like me, unofficial paths to official favours, how it gladdens the very soul of a veteran diplomatist to throw now and then to the cerberus within, the sop of a disinterested appointment. To grant, unbribed, save by the *piquant* character of the solicitation, to a now grey-haired partner at an obsolete race-ball, or light-hearted companion of those brighter days—loved all the better for being the very antipodes of his present frigid zone of courtly etiquette—some precious boon, which it is part of his pleasure to be able to deny; (perhaps with exquisite ministerial *hauteur* and insolence) to those, who, at the bay-

onet's point of expediency or interest, have been striving to wrest it from him. There are no bits of pathos more genuine, because extorted by the pressure of unwonted feeling, than those which meet my eye, not within the rose-coloured boards of a romance, but beneath what might be supposed the deadly extinguisher of a broad seal of office. They are like the solitary sigh which has been known to be wrung from the unflinching Indian at the stake, by the thought of his distant wigwam and childless mother."

Such were the sentiments, and such the experience of Mrs. Sydney, in conferring temporal benefits far beyond the usual range of an individual, however gifted. But there was a task in which she yet more specially excelled, and which the perilous nature of the times she lived in peculiarly called into exercise. Religion was to her as the air she breathed—the Bible as the food by which existence was supported. Principles, immutable as the rock on which they rested, guarded alike her actions and her opinions; and when she saw all these shaken, as it were, by a moral and political earthquake, and shoals of helpless young creatures cast forth on the stream of life, like frail barks

broken loose from their moorings—she shuddered, as one to whom the danger was known, and acted as one familiar with the remedy.

Here, all the varied energies of her comprehensive mind proved of invaluable efficacy. When the peril to principle was only incipient, mild admonitions and affectionate but forcible warnings, saved their hundreds from contamination. When the wound was deeper, and required probing, she could apply the knife of wholesome severity and caustic of ridicule, to extirpate the deadly canker. And if unhappily the poison had done its full and fatal work, and baffled all, (save the Great Physician), to avert the moral gangrene, she had for the unblushing mischievous propagators of the infection, an uncompromising force of reprehension, a withering intensity of scorn and reprobation, which gained her, (I presume from those whose vitiated systems shrunk from the healthful atmosphere around her) the character of a bigot and a satirist. Her bigotry—I feel ashamed of coupling even ironically the word with such a being—was that of an evangelist; her satire akin to the wholesome irony of an indignant apostle. Things, not men, heresies, not heretics, were its branded and with-

ing victims; and when she lived to see the Egyptian darkness of atheism and anarchy flee before the Ithuriel spear of truth and religion, she gladly laid aside, like the female heroine of some beleaguered city, the panoply which had borne her through the conflict, and rejoiced that her grey hairs might go down henceforward to the grave in peace.

Such was Mrs. Sydney, as described to me by those who had traced her bright path almost from the cradle to the tomb. Who could see it at length thus terminate, without wishing that her memory—like the luminous track left in summer seas by the wake of some deep-freighted and precious vessel—might continue to gladden, though, alas! but for a moment, the world which she so largely befriended?

I hope I need not say I improved the opportunity afforded me, of atoning to the poor officer-artist, for unguarded criticism by substantial kindness—to the best of my power. I found in Mr. Dennison, (who having long quitted the army, had dropped his military designation,) the interesting wreck of a gentleman and a scholar; and during his short gleam of amended health, or rather

~~protracted~~ dissolution—the effect I believe of generous nourishment and a few added comforts—I was able to soothe his mind by benefits more essential than mere unavailing sympathy. It was now that I felt the full value of the introductions at Mrs. Sydney's table, when they enabled me to command the disinterested aid of Dr. G——, whose assiduous, though nearly hopeless professional visits, satisfied that yearning for human skill which not even trust in providence can entirely banish from a sick man's bosom ; while the truly pastoral ones of the mild Dr. S—— compensated for the inefficiency of all human means, by consolations of a higher nature.

The point on which I individually was enabled to soothe and satisfy the dying man's mind, was the future fate and maintenance of his faithful housekeeper ; who, he told me with tears in his eyes, had deprived herself for his sake of the slender provision which should have supported her declining years, in the same spirit of reckless devotion which had made her latterly diminish her own scanty allowance of nourishment, till the power of receiving it was well nigh gone. I assured the grateful invalid that such disinterested virtue was

of itself quite sufficient to secure for the meek little unobtrusive heroine patronage and protection much more efficient than mine ; but that while I lived, she should never again know the semblance of privation. When this last care which yet chained him to earth was finally set at rest, the weary spirit of the toil-worn soldier seemed at once released, and with a warm responsive blessing on his lips, he passed gently away.

It was with strange musings on what may well be called the romance of real life, that I prepared to lay in the grave, as chief, and indeed only mourner, the head of a fellow-mortal, of whose very existence I was some weeks before ignorant, and with whom the veriest accident had brought me so singularly acquainted.

Before giving the necessary order for this last melancholy ceremony, it was indispensable for me to intrude, though reluctantly, on the deep unutterable grief of the faithful house-keeper. I requested, with the respectful feelings which would have attended a similar interview with a bereaved empress—a moment's conversation ; and with the simplicity which governed all her actions, it was unhesitatingly and composedly granted.

The event had been too long foreseen, and partook too much of the nature of a release, to be viewed with clamorous repining. Mrs. Nevil's was the quiet sorrow of one whose earthly "occupation is gone," and who stands alone and loosened from any human tie, in an evil world. "My dear madam," said I, "it is very unwillingly that I force upon you at this time the presence of a stranger, but I am desirous that every fitting respect should be paid to our departed friend; and ignorance of his precise name and age obliges me to trouble you with a painful inquiry."

"It is a painful inquiry, Sir," said she, with an air of calm dignity, which in a thousand instances belied her servile character, "but not one for which I was unprepared. I have been pondering the answer to it ever since my poor master died, and trying to reconcile his known wishes with what I feel to be my duty elsewhere. But it will not do; pride is surely not made for the grave, and still less falsehood and deception. I cannot allow a lie to be engraved on my dear master's coffin, though I connived at it when he was in life, to be vexed by the truth coming out. His name is not Dennison, but Delamere, the last of his family, and a great

Westmoreland one it was in its day, though I have lived to see the end of it. What would my poor mistress have said, had she ever thought her gallant son would owe his burial to the hand of a stranger, though a kind one. But, God be praised ! she was taken away from the evil to come. There is none now but myself to know or care about it, so please to put on his coffin, " Augustus Delamere, aged forty-seven." Her composure, which had hitherto been kept up by a strong effort, fairly gave way as she recited this brief epitaph ; she burst into tears, and dropping her usual respectful courtesy, left the room.

" More romance !" exclaimed I, as I departed from the humble last shelter of one so loftily descended ; and during the mournful ceremony (which the recent discovery induced me to keep more strictly private than ever,) I was haunted both by the strange fate of its object, and an indefinable familiarity with his name. It was romantic and high sounding enough to have taken hold of the fancy, of a young person especially, and it was as connected with my youth, that, like Desdemona's nurse's song, it would not " go out of my mind." Neither would it, however, come into it, at least in any definite or tangi-

ble shape ; so, ashamed of being haunted by a name, I tried to forget and think no more of it.

My first care, after the funeral, was to introduce the good little housekeeper to Mrs. Sydney Hume, already prepossessed in her favour by my enthusiastic report. “ Really, my dear Meredith,” said she, when we next met, just after the interview, “ your *penchant* for old women seems wonderfully favoured by fortune. This delightful little pocket heroine of your’s is, I assure you, a formidable rival ; and as she has already succeeded in captivating one young man ‘ of high degree,’ I shall lose no time in putting her beyond the reach of another.”

“ What do you mean, my dear Mrs. Sydney ?” said I, a little alarmed, “ you don’t mean that there was any attachment between her and the deceased ?” “ I do, but *en tout bien et honneur*, remember, and some thirty years ago,—and all on one side moreover ; suspicious as the good little soul’s late devotion might seem, to those who cannot for the lives of them believe in virtue for virtue’s sake. I’ll tell you her story, if you can sit down half an hour, before its own naive simplicity evaporates in the turmoil of my usual morning levee.

“ The good woman then, a sister spinster of my

own, (though by the courtesy, not of age merely like myself, but of office also, yclept Mrs.,) is the orphan daughter of an honest Westmoreland school-master, which accounts for her knowledge of the humanities and so forth, and early adoption into the family of the proud and stately Mrs. Delamere, mother of your late patient, as humble companion and reader. But I must let her speak, and you must fancy her looking so still and modest, and resigned all the time ; only a little streak of faint red crossing her thin cheek at one point of her narrative, and a little convulsive twitch of her snow-white apron at another.

“ Madam,” said she, (after long resisting my urgent entreaties to be scated,) in answer to my inquiries respecting her past life and future prospects of subsistence, “ I may tell a benevolent lady like yourself, and one who brings my dear late mistress in many things to my remembrance, some parts of my poor history which I could not so well explain to a young stranger gentleman. I was taken, I believe you know, into the noble family I owe so much to, as a companion to Mrs. Delamere. She was come of very high connexions herself, and though her husband lived to spend the poor remains

of his estate on dogs and horses, (leaving her jointure secured on it however when all was sold,) she never ceased to expect all would come right, and as it should do, by some great marriage for her son, who went into the army quite a boy, and was then very gay and handsome.

“ Poor lady, it was a terrible shock she got when he came home some eight and twenty years ago, a perfect wreck from the West Indies, and lingered near a twelvemonth between death and life, before even a mother’s heart could fairly hope he would recover. All this time she tended him day and night as long as her strength lasted, and when it failed, so did I. Poor gentleman, he required it all, and it never entered my simple head that anything ill could come of what was but my duty. I was nine years older than the young squire, then but a lad of twenty, but unluckily Ma’am” (and here, both check and apron bore testimony to the narrator’s modesty,) “ unluckily people chose to say I was pretty, though Heaven knows there was little in that, and what with my long careful attendance, my reading to him and amusing him when he had no one else to come near him, the poor gentleman—he was but a boy—chose to take it into his head to marry me.

I beg pardon Ma'am, for mentioning anything so preposterous ; he must have been light-headed at the time, and so I should always have thought and said nothing about it, if he had not himself, (and I am sure he might have known better) foolishly mentioned it to his mother.

“ I thought the old lady would have gone as crazy as himself, and it was no wonder, madam, for her great hopes of his marrying well were all coming about again with his health, and she would rather have seen him in his coffin than married to a servant, and I was no more, though a favourite and better educated one. She flew upon me for concealing the matter, (to do her justice, she never dreamt of my having a hand in it,) and upon her son for disgracing his family. He took it all very quietly, for he was still weak, and used to dread her anger ; but he did not for all give up the idle notion, and as soon as he began to be able to crawl abroad again, he took a step, Lord love him ! so like a boy as he was, and rode to a parish three miles off, and had our banns asked, fancying, I never could tell why, that if this were done three times, and nobody to question it, neither his mother nor I could object.

“It came to my ears first, which was a great mercy; and pretending my aunt at Kendal was very ill, I asked leave of my mistress to go and attend her, leaving a letter behind, to tell her the reason why. I besought her not to be hard upon the poor young gentleman, who she might see was not altogether himself after his long illness; and rather to get him quietly back to his regiment, where he would soon forget it, than thwart him into a fever, or something worse. It was very bold in me to advise so great and sensible a lady, but then I knew my young master fully better than she did, and the hasty temper he had from herself. Poor dear gentleman ! he lived to get entirely over it, and was in all his sad last illness as gentle as a lamb.

“To make a long story short, ma’am, I believe Mrs. Delamere took my advice; and soon after, the lieutenant got an exchange to a healthier quarter of the world, and went away for a number of years. I returned to the hall, and my good mistress, notwithstanding her pride, never made me feel what had happened she well knew, contrary to my wish and ways of thinking; only when she died, which was a few years after, she left me, as she had

always promised, a small annuity, on the express condition that I should never hold any correspondence, direct or indirect, with her son, and if I did, I was to forfeit it immediately.

“ This showed her fear of *him*, though, as I hope and trust, not of *me* ; but there was little danger of our meeting, and I went home to my own place, and lived comfortably on my annuity. It was all the poor lady had to leave, after her great expectations ; and I sometimes felt as if, little as it was, her son should have had it rather than me, though he was by this time a captain, and I always expected to hear of his marrying greatly, as I am sure he might. But, alas ! his health again gave way, and the next I heard of him was, that he had come home, and a hopeless invalid for life, with not a soul that I knew of, to nurse or take care of him. This vexed me ; but you may suppose, Ma'am, I was not going to throw myself in his way, (though by this time past forty, and he come to an age to forget his follies,) as long as I believed he had wherewithal to get advice and attendance without me. So I lived on some years longer, very anxious and uneasy at times about my poor young mas-

ter ; now hearing that he had sold his commission and gone abroad, and then for a long time without any tidings at all.

“ I shall never forget the day, about eighteen months ago, that I was buying some thread in a little shop at Kendal, when a pedlar came in, (who belonged to the country, and used to call in his rounds at the hall,) and seeing me, said, ‘ ah, Mrs. Nevil, is this you ? It will be sad news to you, that poor Captain Delamere, that used to be the joy and pride of your grand lady, is dying by inches in a garret at Edinburgh, with no friend near him, nor money either, as I can learn.’ ‘ Good God ! Will,’ said I, ‘ how came you to know this ?’ ‘ By the merest chance. I was cheapening Shetland hose in a great quaker hosier’s somewhere in their Old Town there, when a rough landlady-looking woman came in to buy a bit of flannel. ‘ Who is it for, friend Peggy ?’ said the canny hosier. ‘ Oh,’ says she, ‘ it is for one that wants it sair, and that’ll be reason enough for an honest man like you. Whether it ’ll ever be paid, I canna pretend to say ; for it’s weeks since I saw the colour of my poor lodger’s money.

But I'll pay for it myself, Saunders, before he should drec could ; for he's a gentleman, I'm sure, though a distressed one.'

“ ‘ She turned round quite abashed, for at that moment a thin atomy of a person came in on the same errand, (which she kindly thought to get done before him) ; and *I* thought to have dropped down in the shop, when I saw the thread-bare miserable object was the heir that should have been, of Delamere Hall. I went out after the old woman, and got it all out of her. He's on his last legs, poor gentleman, and at his last shilling too, she verily believes ; and what's to become of him, she says, God only can tell.'

“ I felt so faint, ma'am,” continued your little model of a serving damsel, “ when I heard this terrible story, that I could scarce totter out of the shop ; and my first thought was how to get to nurse my poor mistress's son, without being a burden on him, which it was plain he was quite unable to bear. I might, perhaps, but for Will's knowing of the matter, have joined him in Edinburgh—where he went by a feigned name—and none the wiser ; but now that a pedlar who dealt in news as much as wares, was in the secret, it was in vain

to think it should not spread abroad; and besides the annuity which would have gone at once, I did not choose to risk my character by any underhand proceedings.

“So the very next morning, ma'am, I put on my cloak, and walked over to the town nearest the Hall, where my annuity was somehow or other paid by the corporation. ‘Gentlemen,’ said I, (for the Mayor I knew, though only a carcass butcher, was very fond of a little civility,) ‘you are aware that I hold the little pension left me by my late mistress, on condition of never seeing or speaking to her only son. The reasons for this are long past and gone, but the thing can’t be altered; and if I do see and speak to him, aye, and wait on him too, as I have set my heart on doing—I know I may forfeit every thing. This, I’m sure, I should not mind; but the heir of Delamere, I grieve to say, has enough to do to maintain himself, and empty-handed I cannot go to him, not even to smooth his dying pillow. Now, if instead of thwarting, and fretting, and keeping me away from my duty till my poor master is gone, and then perhaps paying me a pittance I shall never bear to look on, for a score of years to come, (for I am but three and

fifty,) you would only do as I wish, and give me ever so small a sum in hand, and let me do as I please with it and myself—I would bless you to the latest hour of my life, and you would be rid of the old troublesome woman, and her grief and her annuity for ever. A very little, alas ! will see out my poor mistress's son in credit and reputation—and oh ! let me have the satisfaction of thinking her money, (that never should have been mine,) bought peace and comforts for his dying hours.'

“ To do the corporation justice, Ma'am, they made very little work about it, though they bade me consider twice before I gave up my maintenance for life, for a trifle that would soon be spent and gone. They just looked in a book to see what the chance of my living to plague them might be, and then gave me, instead of my fifteen pounds a-year, an hundred pounds in my pocket, which, (as I never had the quarter of it before,) I thought never could have an end. I thanked them with tears in my eyes, and having just gone home to tie up my bundle, got into the first coach for Scotland, and was set down next afternoon in Edinburgh.

“ Will the pedlar had forgotten the street where the captain lived, and I could think of no way of

finding him out, but by asking at the quaker ho-sier's, who I found, every one knew, but who lived a great way from where the coach stopped. I went there, however, and I daresay the lads thought me crazy when I asked for a thin sickly gentleman, who lodged with a landlady called Peggy ; for I did not know by what name he went, and durst not mention that of Delamere. Just as the boys were beginning to be uncivil, luckily the good master came into the shop, and said, ' Friend, I think I can help thee in thy inquiries. The sick man, I hope thou art come to take care of, live just round the corner here, close to the great hospital, or infirmary as we call it. I'll send a boy to show thee the way.' I thanked him heartily, and soon got to the door of the shabby lodging which I afterwards lived to think a princely abode.

" I sent away the lad, for 't was really some time before I could summon courage to ring the bell. A good rough sort of woman, whom I guessed to be the landlady, opened to me, and when I asked for her sick lodger, eyed me at first rather suspiciously. But when she saw that I was neither young nor handsome, but a sad, sorrowful, heart-broken old woman, she asked me in kindly enough, and pointed

to the room up stairs, where she said I would find him. ‘Is he indeed so ill as I have heard?’ said I, shaking violently. ‘Aye, that is he truly, honest woman,’ said she, in her blunt way, ‘if you’re sib to him, (as I jalouse from your greetin’,) ye’ve a sorry sight to see up that stair.’

“This was Job’s comfort, Ma’am, for one so cast down already, but I prayed for strength and support, and managed to get up to the door. I tapped gently, and a voice as weak as an infant’s called out, ‘Come in.’ I did so, and was half thankful to find my poor master did not at first know me. I’m sure I should never have known *him*, had I not once before seen what disease can bring the youngest and handsomest to—let alone a middle-aged, worn-out soldier. As for me, the nine years difference which he made so light of when we were both young, now made me look like his mother; and so, God knows, I felt, when I found voice at last to say, ‘Captain Delamere, will you not speak to poor Eleanor, whom your mother in heaven has sent to tend and wait upon you once more, as she did thirty years ago, at the Hall?’

“There was very little light in the room, but at the voice, he started up and said, ‘Good God!

and are you Eleanor ?' ' I am sir,' said I, ' your faithful and dutiful nurse and servant, as it is good my part to be, as long as providence shall give me strength, or you occasion for my duty.' ' God bless you, God bless you for it !' repeated the poor gentleman, quite overcome ; for it was long since he had seen, or heard the voice of a friend. ' But oh ! Eleanor !' said he, looking more earnestly on me, ' how much has happened since we parted ! Time has done its work slowly but surely on you, and disease has made me the spectacle you see.' ' God's will be done, Sir,' said I, ' with us both. All I pray is, that our present meeting may be blessed to us, and that your sainted mother may approve of my coming to supply her place, as well as my poor means permit, to the son of her love.'

" I would not let him talk much, Ma'am, for indeed he was very unfit for it ; but after he had made the landlady get me a cup of tea, and show me a very decent little room up stairs to put my things in, he would have me back to ask how I came to think of travelling so far, and to say how kindly he took it. I begged him to keep his mind easy ; that I was come, I hoped, to be of use and

comfort to him, and hinted that he need want nothing his state required, as I had a little of his dear mother's legacy, (of course I said not a word of the annuity,) still left, which was but his own.

“He was just beginning to exclaim, ‘Oh, Eleanor! how thankful I am that I did not by my rash folly,’ . . . when I said gravely, once for all, ‘Follies, Sir, are best forgotten. We have all much to answer for in that way, and many escapes to be thankful for, but talking of them will do no good.’ So I wished him a good night, promising him a better made bed, and tidier room to-morrow, and slipped up, very tired, but with a grateful heart, to my little cabin.

“The first weeks and months of my attendance, were a real pleasure. The poor captain got a vast deal better, he could sit up first for hours together, and then go out almost every day as summer came on, to read the papers at the shop where Mr. Meredith met him. This was owing, I daresay, chiefly to cordials and advice, both of which he had long been without; as the old doctor of his regiment (whose settling in Edinburgh first made him think of coming there to be under his friendly care) died of an hospital fever, and the captain was never able

to pay any one else to succeed him. Now his case was one that needed constant attendance, and being so near the infirmary, I got young doctors to call in on their way for less than the usual fees.

“ It did my heart good, you may think, to see the dear gentleman improve so, yet, would you believe it, ma'am, I sometimes half dreaded his recovery, and even grudged his appetite when my money (part of which had gone to pay old scores,) began to melt away sadly ; and where any more was to come from, God alone could tell. Through the landlady, I got in some plain work, which helped a little, and the Captain, (whom I never durst tell exactly how the case stood, but who suspected it from many little things,) took to doing the drawings Mr. Meredith bought so providentially.

“ This kept us afloat for a while—but, oh ! madam, it was a sad time, when neither dared speak of what preyed on both our minds—his, that I should suffer on his account—and mine, that toil as I would, I could not keep him in the comforts his case required. The effect of all this was soon visible. He drooped again, ma'am, and this time, (God forgive me for repining) it was not so

much illness as want and anxiety that brought him low. The lodgings we had, though so indifferent, were now beyond our means, and I knew not where to get cheaper, till one day, as I went to the print-shop to ask if some drawings were sold ; I heard one of a knot of porters say, it was a shame to let such crazy buildings as those in Conolly's close remain standing ; while another answered—
‘ but what would become of the swarms of poor creatures who lived there for nothing ?’

“ Heaven knows, lodgings for nothing were just what we wanted ; so I inquired farther, and found, that though some little rent was expected for the waste and ghastly though once fine rooms, up this alley, it was the least for which human beings could have shelter over their heads in a great city. It was close to the shop too, and the newspaper and nice fire in the reading-room were, I might say, my poor master's last comfort.

“ It would only hurt you, madam, as well as kill me, to go over all we suffered for the last dreadful fortnight, before the fire—which did so much harm to others—proved a blessing from heaven to us. I had begged in the streets, ma'am, the very night before—but I suppose I was too

faint-hearted, for I got nothing ; and the very last article of clothes not on my back, was pawned for the drop of gruel which moistened my poor master's lips that blessed morning. But it is indeed when all else fails, that providence takes us up ; and my dear master, (whose Bible for the last many weeks was never from under his pillow) lived to see its gracious promises fulfilled here, and is no doubt richly repaid for his troubles, in a world of rest and happiness. When God's time and mine comes, I hope we shall meet in heaven."

" And till that time comes, Mrs. Nevil," said I, " it shall be my business to make you reap the reward of your merit upon earth. What say you to being matron of the very hospital in whose neighbourhood you so long lived ?" " Me ! madam !" exclaimed the modest little woman, quite incredulous, " I thought it was a lady's office." " And I am sure you have a lady's mind, if indeed many are lucky enough to resemble you." . . .

" But," said I, interrupting Mrs. Sydney, " my surprise, I must confess, equals Mrs. Nevil's, at her good fortune." " Aye, I intended to surprise you, Master Meredith," replied my old friend, calmly ; " I am fond of surprises. But you forget

my flirtation with the omnipotent Jamie G——, even had the little matron elect not herself made a conquest of him by her skill and tenderness as a sick-nurse. Every man has his weak side—and that is a physician's. Be this as it may, it's all settled, and I wish you joy of your inamorata's promotion."

CHAPTER XIV.

Alas! my mother! when this changeless brow
Shall be more like, and not more cold than thou,
How shall I long ev'n for that glance of care
Which erst I griev'd should ever visit there—
How wish to raise again thy anxious look
The very chiding that I could not brook,
The very tears I could not bear to flow!

Lady Byron to her mother's picture.

I WENT in the course of the morrow, both to congratulate the good woman, and discharge, previous to her removal next day, my debt to the honest German for the lodgings. I fulfilled the latter duty first, and had the double pleasure of seeing a worthy industrious man's eyes sparkle with joy at the sight of the very moderate sum he would receive, and of hearing him launch out in praises of his little lodger. “*Ein treffliches Frau mein Herr!*” exclaimed the good man of spectacles and

barometers. “*ein* very goot womans, I sall assure you—and *ein prächtig*—vat you call ‘*norse*.’”

When I tapped at the door up stairs, Mrs. Nevil was so deeply engaged as not immediately to answer. I repeated my knock, and then, knowing her to be in the little parlour, followed it up by opening the door. I found her surrounded by papers, which she was evidently assorting with the care, and laying aside for destruction with the reluctance of one who regarded them as relics.

“I am an intruder, I see, Mrs. Nevil,” said I, drawing back, “I only came to wish you heartily joy of the honourable office your merit has procured you.” “O dear, no, sir,” cried she, rising with her usual respectful courtesy, and pushing away the table of papers; “I have plenty of time to finish my task of duty to the dead, and have more need now to shew gratitude to the living. I am not gifted with words, sir, but to you and Mrs. Hume I trust my good conduct in my new station, will be my best thanks.” “Oh! sir,” continued she, glancing at the papers, and her meek eyes filling with tears, “if my poor master that was here so lately, or she whose precious relics I have at length been forcing myself to burn, as she de-

sired, could look up and see how I am provided for, they would thank you better than I can do."

"Say no more, I beseech you, Mrs. Nevil," cried I; and to get rid of the subject, I adverted to the papers. "It must be a painful task you are at present engaged in, but I daresay a proper one." "Yes, sir, so I consider it, for though the letters it has brought so many things back to my mind to look over now concern not a human creature alive, I should think it disrespectful to let them be bandied about after my death (which cannot be distant) among strangers. The poor captain had a superstitious veneration, like me, for his mother's letters, and never would burn one of them; but go they must now, and I am taking perhaps the last day I can call my own to do it. I read as I go on, sir—I can't for the life of me help it, and it is like having my dear lady back again, to hear her thus converse on things long gone by and forgotten.

"By the by," added she, "there is a paper here, sir, which I had laid aside on purpose till I should see you—that seems to concern others, for it has marked on it, in my lady's hand, 'not to be burned, nor opened, but before witnesses.' I am

glad you are come in, sir, if you have a moment's leisure to see me break the seal, though at the end of more than twenty years, it is not likely to signify much to any one."

"You shall break it yourself, sir," said she, **handing** it to me, "and then all will be as it should, no doubt." I broke the seal with the very languid interest which a man may be supposed to attach to some antediluvian family affair of a person he never saw. The blank outer cover enclosed a letter, closely written in a delicate female hand, with a foreign post mark upon it, and on unfolding this—there dropped out a strange shabby-looking bit of scrawled paper, which seemed as if it had been smoked some centuries in Herculaneum. I took it up listlessly—cast on it a vacant glance, saw the date of Albany, in 179—, the signature (and a strange one it was) of a free black, called Caesar—and in the body of the document, the very uncommon—yet heaven knows, to me familiar name, of Doctor Gideon Aspinall!

The paper fell out of my hand for very surprise. I caught up the dropped letter that lay beside it, and kissed—till I believe, the good little woman thought me mad—the never-before beheld hand-

writing of my darling mother. All flashed on me in a moment. The name of Delamere, which had haunted me so long, was that of the friend and correspondent of whom my mother perpetually spoke, to whom she had been indebted for the first knowledge of the Doctor's relationship. I had just voice to say to Mrs. Nevil, "this letter is from my mother, my long lost darling mother." In an instant, with the intuitive delicacy that marked every action of her life, she had glided into the next room, and I sat down to devour my treasure, forgetting the enclosure as completely as if no such man as the American doctor had existed.

MRS. MEREDITH TO MRS. DELAMERE.

NEW YORK, *March 179--.*

How do I picture to myself, my dear maternal friend, your surprise on seeing dated from the now frozen shores of the west, the letter of one whom you imagined panting under the burning suns of the East. The change, alas, has been matter not of choice, but of necessity. The health of my Edmund rendered some removal indispensable; would to God it had, as originally intended—brought me back to the arms of you, my first, I fear I may say,

my only friend. But in quest of wealth—or at least competence, for one dearer far than herself to your poor Emily—she has come to a land of strangers, the sport and victim of the same idle baseless hopes that lured her first from your side.

I have not forgotten, my kind foster-mother, the ominous sigh with which you witnessed, rather than sanctioned, a marriage unratified by parental benedictions. Had you told me, as your prophetic looks often seemed to say, that, with Edmund's unabated love, and the smiles of a boy of his to cheer me, I could ever know unhappiness, I should not have believed you. It was long ere I could believe my own heart. But in the midst of many blessings, and all that mutual love can afford, I have lived to shed many a tear since I left you—lived to doubt, if not to repent, (for another at least) the step which made him an outcast.

As long as Edmund was well and busy, with his proud martial air, and light elastic step, unchecked by care or disease—I was happy—happier than mortals *can* long expect to remain ; and when little Edmund was born, the very image of his doating father, and lay like a little white rosebud on the

lap of his gawthy nurse, I was too happy, my joy was at the full.

But when Edmund began to droop under a climate and fatigues, which, but for me, he never need have braved—when he suppressed his complaints, and made light of his sufferings to avoid the semblance of reproach—my heart began to whisper, as it has never since ceased to do, “Rash girl! why did you banish him from country and kindred, and let him (though God knows I long resisted), resign for you ease, health and affluence?”

When his mother died, her heart broken no doubt all the sooner that its darling was taken from her, mine smote me cruelly, for I saw that Edmund’s did; and that the tears he shed, were not of grief only, but remorse. And when he dried them hastily before me, and spoke of other things, it was sad to think he could not grieve for his mother, without seeming to reflect on his wife. His father, hard as he was, would often, I saw, come across him: not that he said so, but when ships arrived from England, he was always so anxious, and when other faces were dressed in smiles from

home, his grew so visibly sad. He wrote, I know, often and often, to his father—and so did I—but no answer came ; and then we heard of his second marriage, and both our faint hopes died within us, though neither would acknowledge it to the other.

Edmund's health too grew worse, and he would gaze on his boy and me with looks that cut me to the heart. So painful had thoughts of home become to him, that I scarce knew how to get him to embark, while it might yet retrieve his health ; and you will not wonder if I grasped, like a drowning person, at a twig which promised to unite possible competence, with renovated health, in another quarter of the globe.

It was you, I think, who first told me of the strange old kinsman of my father's in America, who was in his day so great a loyalist, and fought as a volunteer ; and then, thinking himself ill-requited, took to the woods in disgust. It was tidings of his existence and wealth, accidentally heard at Calcutta, which brought me across the globe ; thinking perhaps his desolate heart might cling to a creature of his name and kindred, and open at the sight of distress, which a little of his superfluous store would do much to lighten.

What *might* have been the case, had he looked on my care-worn cheek, or seen the ravages of climate on Edmund's manly form, I know not ; for we were denied access to his presence, not harshly but decidedly ; our relationship freely admitted as the nearest in blood and law, while the already irrevocable destination of his riches was assigned by the singular old man as sufficient motive for declining to form new ties, or raise fallacious expectations.

Moved, however, by my meek acquiescence in his unsocial determination, he sent unexpectedly for my boy, and after caressing the little fellow in a way his old black servant said he had never but once seen him do to any child before, he brought out of his strange hoards a sum of several hundred dollars, which indolence and reluctance to mingle with mankind had prevented him from adding to his vested funds ; and bidding me use it to convey my sick husband back to his country and father, tossed it, along with an odd medley of Indian toys and rarities, into my boy's lap, and sent him back, half frightened, half delighted, to Albany.

This supply, small as it seemed to one claiming kindred with untold thousands, has proved a bless-

ing indeed. It has procured the best advice, and many a cordial for Edmund, and now that the long cheerless winter is at an end, it enables us to secure a comfortable passage to his native country, for which he *now* owns that his heart yearns. His father is infirm and paralytic, his stepmother reported to be already cumbered with wealth she cannot use. God only knows, whether the path of duty and interest may not turn out the same, but at all events, the former must be the right one. I am happier since our passage was taken, than I have been for years, for Edmund now speaks of England; and if it is even with a sigh, it is so much better than sighing, and saying nothing.

It is impossible the old man can continue implacable. If he resists my husband's altered countenance—the smile of my boy, which softened the rugged bosom of the recluse of the woods, cannot plead in vain with a grandfather. If he will but take the two Edmunds to his home and heart, God knows, *I* would almost submit to be an exile during the few years he can live to banish me. I would come and hide my tears and errors in your affectionate bosom, and shelter me there like the dove, till this “tyranny be overpast.”

Adieu, my beloved friend. I am warned to prepare for our departure, and there are here, alas ! no kind civil Sarahs to do every thing for me better than I could do it myself. I shall go softly all my days and be thankful, for many things I never prized before ; a steady respectful English nurse I shall be in danger of worshipping. Pity me on board with no female but a coarse negro sort of she cabin-boy, not a whit more refined or servicable.

But it is to England we go, and that is enough.
Once more adieu. E. M.

P.S.—I enclose, for precaution's sake, an attested copy of the old black servant's affidavit, that I am his master's nearest relation, which, in case it might benefit my boy, I bethought me of making him take, when he came back to Albany with the child. He can write,—a rare accomplishment ; and having been manumitted, is a competent witness. Something in the chapter of accidents *may* come of it. Edmund laughed at me, but mothers, I need not tell *you*, are provident."

"Provident ! aye truly, my mother," sighed I, as my eye rested on the scrap of coarse American

paper, dingy with age, and blotted with poor Caesar's cabalistic scrawls ; yet the probable talismanic key to all his master's hidden treasure. It was regularly drawn up, and attested by a magistrate of Albany before witnesses, so that its validity in America being unquestionable, I might consider myself at length undoubted heir to the doctor's property.

Will it be believed that amid some natural swellings of the heart, and throbbings of the pulse such as flesh is heir to on similar occasions, I felt acutely the disappointment of Pauline's equally high-raised hopes ? No sooner was the point decided, than I all at once doubted whether she would allow me to repair the injustice, or at least partiality of fortune, by making her mistress of the whole ; nay I soon instinctively felt my chance of a boon to which riches were dross, rather impaired than augmented by the acquisition. Had I been sure to have thus put Pauline in undisputed possession, I think I could have set fire to the paper with no great effort of generosity ; for I was a lover, and it is difficult to be happy at the expense of one truly beloved. But as the annihilation of my claims was by no means tantamount to the es-

tablishment of her's—I grew rational, and saw that by enforcing mine I could at least put the whole in her power by a tender of my hand ; and in the event—which the raven within would anticipate—of being rejected, find means to compel her to accept a part, by threatening to give it up altogether, and let the American lawyers, or American hospitals take it among them.

My first impulse was to put the packet in my bosom, and fly to Mrs. Sydney. I nearly knocked down John Newborough in my impatience to get at his mistress ; who, looking up with flushed cheek and brightened eye from the perusal of a thin quarto, which I afterwards found to be the then newly published *Lady of the Lake*—seemed quite in a mood for hearing something extraordinary. “ Pray my dear Malcolm Grame,” said she, “ for by the courtsey of romance so I must at present address you—are you red-hot from a foray, or panting from the chase, or flushed from the revel, or only, after the manner of lovers, a little mad nor'-north-west this morning—that you look so perilously unlike a douce English student of philosophy at the sober hour of noon ?”

“ A little excited, Mrs. Sydney, I must confess,”

answered I, blushing, “but neither with battle nor wine, no nor love either at this precise moment; unless it be love to triumph over all one loves best. I am undoubted heir to old Gideon Aspinall, that’s all I know—whether I am glad or sorry, it would puzzle Œdipus to unravel!” “I’ll do it for him,” answered my old friend, kindly shaking me by the hand, “you are glad to have it in your power to act handsomely by Pauline, half afraid she wont let you—ashamed to rob her—dying to enrich her—feeling already the *embarras des richesses* in the shape of a fit of well-founded diffidence; in short, a modester as well as richer man than you were two hours ago. There’s your riddle for you, and an odd one it is.”

“Do you really read people’s thoughts?” said I, surprised to hear mine thus anatomized; “would to heaven you could read and interpret another’s. Fool that I was ever to think a few thousands more or less could make me worthier of Pauline!” “Not a whit worthier,” my dear Meredith, “except as a man, who honestly rejoices his inamorata has not a *sous* must always appear so in the eyes of a woman of sense. I know few things more likely to make Pauline listen to your generous proposal,

than to learn from another, that you despair of its success, so I'll tell her immediately all about it ; that is," added the good lady deliberately unlocking her red morroco portfolio, "when you've told me, for at present I live, (as my pedantic old housekeeper once said of a woodcock,) by induction."

The tale was soon told. It lay all in the compass of the odd bit of saffron-coloured paper ; to examine which, my old friend took off (as her manner was) the short-sighted glasses with which she had been reading my averted countenance. "A very pretty combination of old rags and pot-hooks, truly," exclaimed she, as she finished the survey. "I doubt if poor Raleigh found any thing so indubitably golden in El Dorado. It remains to be seen if you can reverse the alchymy, and by converting your gold to paper again, make it purchase happiness. Pauline's an odd girl with odd notions—but faint heart never won fair lady. Give me and my missive the start of a post, that my old sense may neutralize her young nonsense ; and if you don't win and wear her, it shall be no fault of mine. Go away now, that's a good boy, and walk off your excitement on the Calton hill. You need

not take the lover's leap, however, till all else fails you."

I found a better sedative than that recommended by the good lady, in a visit of apology and explanation to poor little Mrs. Nevil, whose meek subdued aspect, and calm though heartfelt congratulations, did more to sober and chasten the tumultuous agitation of my feelings than all the philosophy in the world. But there was more of a soothing and composing nature connected with this interview; for though like myself, she had, it seems, only a vague idea that the name of Meredith was somehow or other endeared to her late mistress—to that of Emily Aspinall she was no stranger, and retained a lively remembrance of the exquisite beauty of the little flaxen-haired foster child, whose early removal from Mrs. Delamere's care had led to her own adoption as a substitute. In after life she had never seen my poor mother, as in the visits to London, by which the intimacy was continued, and in one of which my mother's marriage had taken place, she never accompanied her late lady. "I used to be very jealous, I remember," said she, "when I first came to the Hall, of the love my mistress and every one bore

to pretty Miss Emily ; little did I think to live to be under such obligations to her son."

When I returned, after three of the longest days I ever remember dragging through, to Mrs. Sydney's door—from the bell of which I with difficulty kept my hand till a decent interval had elapsed since it was rung by the postman (whose steps I had been dogging for the previous hour)—it was with an indefinable presentiment of evil. Old John Newborough's once raven locks, scarce yet powdered for the day, seemed ominously grizzled ; and his thin narrow visage drawn out to portentous length. " The leddy's thrang wi' her letters," said he, rather gruffly, as he let me in—" I wish the Captain and Miss Liny may be weel. I saw her hand shake as she broke the seal o' the anc frae Manchester." " Are you taking notice of mine, you old Cerberus?" thought I, as I felt every fibre in my body quivering with strong emotion. I could scarcely stand, and had not John compassionately opened the parlour door, I doubt if my hand could have achieved it.

Mrs. Sydney was so engrossed with her letter, that she did not at first look up ; but I knew by the twinkle of her eye, and the quiver of her lip as

she read, and by a contraction rarely to be seen on her open brow, that she both deplored and disapproved the decision it contained. "All's over, I see," said I, not very decorously interrupting her, "tell me the worst at once, my dear Mrs. Sydney." "It is as we both feared," answered she, sighing with almost youthful sympathy for youthful disappointment. "Pauline, who, it provokes me to gather, was getting quite reconciled to my version of you before this unlucky discovery—won't own it *now*, lest wealth, not worth, should seem to have worked the spell. I wish the old gentleman, or, God forgive me ! the old papers at least, had been chucked into the fire."

"I can put them there yet," exclaimed I, eagerly recurring to my before mentioned notion of burning the certificate, and replacing things on their former footing. "No, no, my dear Meredith," said my aged friend, more soberly, though a flush of almost juvenile brilliancy attested her participation in my emotion : "Pauline, though this false delicacy of her's does savour of romance, is not romantic enough to be won by a novel-like renunciation of rightful claims. A better way than resigning your fortune is, to show that you can use it

worthily. Let her see that its employment is such as she must long to share in, and perhaps we may succeed in bribing her after all. Every body has a weak side ; and Pauline's is, I think, the power of doing good."

" Oh ! why should she voluntarily deprive herself of it ?" exclaimed I, in bitterness of spirit—" she that could teach me so well how to set about it ? I'll tell you what, Mrs. Sydney, you may dissuade me from giving up to the chances of law what you could never prevent my resigning (were it in my power) to Pauline ; but if I touch, except for purposes of charity dictated by yourself, the gold which has cost me my chance of her hand, I'll give up all the faint hopes that will cling to me, that she may yet be mine in spite of it."

" I hope she may, my dear Edmund ; and in the mean time, it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. If by one year's sacrifice, and I trust it will be no more, of an income you have no use for, you can lay up treasure in heaven, and win Pauline upon earth, it will be well bestowed, and I'll be both your almoner and your trumpeter on the occasion.

“ But, in the mean time, before disposing of her eggs, we have yet to make the golden goose our own. I’ll put you in a way at once. An old diplomatic chum and crony of my brother’s is our envoy to the land of Jonathan. His influence will bar trickery and chicane, and give you immediate possession of what the law entitles you to. Give me your certificate. I don’t feel sure of your not committing some folly till it is in my pocket. I’ll enclose it in a bit of choice maiden eloquence to another friend at the foreign office ; and before you can say Jack Robinson, you shall touch the Yankee dollars, and convert them into English loaves and blankets—aye, and blessings to boot. The prayers of some scores of happy families will not mar your wooing, Edmund, believe me.”

I am ashamed to say that my studies now came to a premature conclusion. My stimulus to industry was gone. I looked upon Edinburgh, its ancient towers and far-famed university, as a disappointed alchymist might be supposed to regard the laboratory and apparatus which had failed to realize his golden dreams. If the man who reads for a degree, and is plucked, (as the Oxford college cant goes), seldom does good afterwards, how

must he be discouraged who studies for a wife, and finds he has reaped nothing, but “ words, words ! Horatio ! ” I hope, however, I had unconsciously imbibed ideas also ; not as yet matured into any shape, yet destined insensibly to colour my future existence, and rob it of the inanity I now for ever abjured.

But Scotland, like a disenchanted talisman, had grown distasteful to me, and the mild pitying eye, and playful rallying smile of Mrs. Sydney, were alike difficult to bear. London in May was not to be thought of by one who had learned at Glen Falconar the meaning of the word *summer*. Manchester was forbidden, and alas ! uninviting ground. Watering places I had loathed with a lighter heart and emptier brain ; so in pure quest at once of novelty and solitude, I betook myself to Gloucestershire.

It was with a heart softened by every kindred feeling of gratitude, love and admiration, that I bade adieu to Mrs. Sydney Hame. “ You are quite right to go, Edmund,” said she, forcing a smile ; “ you are spoilt at present for a philosopher, and quite fit for a hermit. Your seclusion is quite in keeping with the rest of your romantic history, and

shall be made the most of to your heroine. But mind, it must be turned to account, like your legacy, and while *it* makes hundreds of others happy, do try what rational happiness you can extract from the country for yourself. Glen Falconar has made you a little aware of what green fields can do even for a cockney, (for such you were, to all intents and purposes, maugre your Indian birth and American travels, when I first knew you, Master Edmund)."

"Ah! but," said I, mournfully, shaking my head, "at Glen Falconar I had scenery, and society, and kindness, and none of these can I expect at my old ruin of a house in Gloucestershire." "I'll tell you what you will have in the mean time, that will do quite as well, indeed better, in your present case. Novelty, the interest of a place of your own, above all, plenty to do. Pull down and build,—plant and grub up, as if Hemsworth, and Hemsworth only, were to be your heritage for life. If you don't make it pretty in the eyes of others, you will infallibly do so in your own. Its beauty will be all of your own creating, and that is the only sort, I assure you, that time cannot impair. If you speak me fair, I may perhaps come, when you are all in order, your flowers in blow, and your songsters

in voice, to give you an account of my next year's Yankee stewardship ; and who knows but I may bring with me a female *chargé d'affaires*, to take it and the owner at once off my hands."

" Oh, my dear Mrs. Sydney," exclaimed I, " you would make a man go with a smile on his face to Siberia. God bless you," (and I kissed her hand this time, as I had longed to do the first day I saw her), " you have put new life in me. For God's sake, write when you have any thing good to tell me."

" I shall always have to tell you, that I think you an excellent lad," said the dear old lady, pressing my hand in maternal kindness ; " what more I feel towards you, I'll keep to myself, for fear Pauline, all saucy as she is, might not approve. And now, get away with you ; scenes at seventy-five are ridiculous things."

On my way south, I stopped at D——, (though the very sight of the inn door, where commenced my nocturnal acquaintance with Pauline, was horribly painful), to acquaint Lawyer T—— with the discovery of my rights, and the mortifying circumstance of their legal enforcement being withdrawn from his professional talons. To make up, how-

ever, for this natural disappointment, I gave him a preposterous fee, on the express understanding that he was never directly, or indirectly, to ask or accept a shilling from the adverse party. I saw him puzzled how to “affect a virtue” so unprofessional as disinterestedness ; so to make matters sure, I dictated, before leaving D——, a letter of attorney-like condolence to the Clitheroe family, in which I made him affirm, (heaven pardon the lie,) “that it was repugnant alike to his feelings and practice, to take fees for unsuccessful preliminary proceedings.”

CHAPTER XV.

*Adieu fortune ! honneurs adieu ! vous et les vôtres,
Je viens ici vous oublier !
Adieu toi même Amour ! bien plus que les autres
Difficile à congédier*

INSCRIPTION ON AN HERMITAGE.

I ARRIVED towards evening of the rainiest day of a weeping summer, at Hemsworth. In the waywardness of a cynic, and inattention to trifles of a hero of romance, I had disclaimed to write beforehand to the old man and woman who lived in the house, to make such preparations as their means afforded ; consequently my debut in what (on the strength of its having belonged to my grandfather,) a novel-writer would call my ancestral mansion, was as ludicrous as discomfort would allow me to think it.

In the first place—tell it not to the modish vo-

taries of midnight!—at little more than eight o'clock on a mid-summer evening, these worthies—like their neighbours of the rookery, and their tributaries of the barn-door, had gone to roost; and those whose fate it has been to knock, amid the pitiless pelting of a west of England shower, till one of two deaf people shall awake, as if by miracle, can alone appreciate my impatience to stand at length on my own hearth.

And a miserable cold hearth it was! for fuel being scarce, and Richard and Deborah strict economists, not even a symptom of the fire which at the antediluvian hour of four, had made their kettle simmer, and warmed the cat to sympathetic purring, now appeared in the scanty rust-eaten grate.

And Dick and Deborah themselves! Not Scarron, nor Rabelais, nor Cervantes, nor Sir Walter, could have done justice to the “admired disorder” and wizard attire of these seneschals of my long-deserted hall. While Dick, a little shrivelled atomy of a man, peered at me with grey half-opened eyes from beneath a huge woollen nightcap, of whose effect on his thin physiognomy and lank figure, an apt illustration was afforded by an ample extinguisher reposing on, and partially annihilating a

farthing rushlight, which on some former and more dissipated occasion had done the sun's usual office of lighting him to bed—Deborah, his tall unfeminine “*missiz*” as he called her, (which I afterwards found, being interpreted, meant *master*,) stared on the unexpected vision of her liege lord, with just the expression of pure supernatural wonder which would have dilated her round saucer eyes if saluted by an actual apparition. Her nightcap had somehow or other disappeared, and her long grizzled tresses escaped from their moorings on a vast cushion which sat on her gigantic head like “*Pelion upon Ossa piled.*” The nether garments, which in her haste, she had snatched up and donned, were so disproportionably short as irresistibly to suggest the idea, (corroborated by subsequent experience,) that they would have much better suited her diminutive and obedient spouse.

However, out of all this chaos, order at length came; and amid a chorus of “*dear me's,*” and “*lack-a-daisys,*” from Dick, and a more effective din of bellows, and kettles, and crockery, from his stirring helpmate, a fire at length smiled upon my hearth, and the table, (which from long custom had learnt to stand with the *à plomb* and precision

of a Parisian dancer, upon three legs,) smoked with the exquisite refreshments of marvellously dry bread, butter, *anno domini* doubtful, and tea from the nearest hayrick. However, I was cold, wet, and hungry, and I sipped and swallowed, or rather made faces and bolted, with laudable perseverance.

The next thing to be considered, and no trifle either, was a bed ; but this, unless I had dispossessed, which Heaven forefend ! my trusty Cerberus and his wife, was unattainable under my dilapidated roof. So the rain having complaisantly subsided from a torrent to a drizzle, I walked, (having in the elation of arriving at my own door rashly dismissed the chaise,) some three miles off, to the sign of the Hen and chickens.

Here, at a very comfortable rural public house, I established my temporary quarters, though I am sure, but for the parting prognostics of good Mrs. Sydney, I should never have looked twice at my Gloucestershire paradise. She was right however ; and even next morning, under a bright sun without, and six hours hard scrubbing from the stout arms of Deborah within, the aspect of things seemed marvellously improved.

Hemsworth—I love to record what it was, for the

encouragement of improvers—was a long straggling house of the age of Elizabeth, I believe, but of the *taste* of no age, being a thing evidently of “shreds and patches,” stitched together by necessitous owners, to accommodate overgrown families. There was not one *good* room (architecturally speaking) in it. On the ground floor it had a long narrow gallery, more resembling a cloister than a room, redeemed however by looking out in all its length upon what must, at some remote period, have been a garden. The rest of the *rez de chaussée*, an ample vaulted kitchen excepted, consisted of those nondescript pigeon holes, in which our ancestors, for unexplained reasons, delighted.

Up stairs, and what a stair! the access to my hayloft at Newmarket was a *Scala Regia* to it—were some dozens of similar crypts or cupboards, curiously subdivided like cells in a honeycomb, and bearing to human beings about the same proportion as these do to their industrious population. One spacious chamber, one alone, made amends for all the monotonous shabbiness of the rest. It was an oddly-shaped room in a turret, whose form it would have puzzled Vitruvius to define, but which from that very irregularity, and the anomaly in modern

architecture of three cross windows, derived the charm of novelty and singularity at least. It had more. It was as I wandered from one to the other of these three windows, that I first learned that Hemsworth had beauties independent of any which the art of man might create. The lights were favourable for the prospect, and whether my eye fell from one lattice of this old-fashioned lady's bower, (for such it had evidently been,) on the long undulating line of the Malvern hills, the Alps of a flat country—or from another, on the venerable spires and stately forest avenues of Tewksbury,—or whether from the third, it rested yet more complacently on a home-scene of wood and verdure, that needed but the hand of neatness to draw forth its latent charms, I felt “Mrs. Sydney is right,—there *is* excitement in a place of one's own.”

All the world knows what, under the influence of excitement, a man—a young one especially—will do. I had two ostensible motives for plunging headlong into improvement—to please Mrs. Sydney, and get rid of my late disappointment: there lurked in the secret recesses of my soul a third, which I shrewdly suspect was the main-spring of my whole activity. Pauline loved the country,

had once pitied me for not loving it too, and had hinted that *there* was a man of property's legitimate home. What if she should one day share it with me? To make it indeed fit for *this*, no labour, no expense could be too much. Oh! how often now (when my resolution not to exceed my income came in the way of the magic of wealth to level difficulties and create changes,) did I bitterly regret the thousands which had vanished on the turf, and at the gaming table, and "left not a wreck behind!"

I spent nine happy, yes absolutely happy months at Hemsworth, up to the eyes in the bliss of brick and mortar, in delightful association with farmers, gardeners, and ditchers. To my astonishment I found the former shrewd, intelligent, and entertaining—not merely wiser than myself on country affairs, but I began to suspect on many a point besides; while the latter were as superior to the Cockney machines or stable vagabonds who had hitherto formed my specimens of low life, as trees are to sign-posts, or the country to Hyde Park.

I did not all this time, like Molières's misanthrope, pick a quarrel with the neighbours, who, in

the simplicity and curiosity of their hearts, came to see the young improver. I received them all, as I thought, with the greatest urbanity, but somehow or other, as they did not repeat their visits, I conclude they must have seen that I was very, very busy.

The letters of Mrs. Sydney were the chief solace of my solitude, and my sole link to the world I had so strangely left behind me. She told me that Pauline, (whom she had meditated disinheriting for her second rejection of my suit,) had been saved from this utmost penalty to an affectionate heart, by a series of family distress, which had rendered sympathy more seasonable than severity.

Her father's health had become so seriously impaired, as to oblige him to resign his situation at Manchester, at the sacrifice of course, of the chief source of emolument which had hitherto kept above penury those dearest to him. This preyed daily and hourly on the affectionate spirit of the mild old veteran, and as a relief to his thoughts as well as change of air and scene, the whole family had paid Mrs. Sydney a visit in Edinburgh.

“ I found Pauline indeed all you represented

her," continued the writer; "just the finished picture, of which, five years before, I had hailed a lovely but of course imperfect outline. I would not say this to *you* Edmund, did I think this 'bright particular star,' as hopelessly beyond your reach as we once both feared. But my *viva voce* representations of your altered, or rather developed character—a thousand minute circumstances which writing could never convey, joined to some which *it* only, perhaps, could, (for in the magnanimity of my rivalry I shall let her read some of your later epistles from Hemsworth,) must contribute greatly to soften and indeed altogether change the nature of her sentiments towards you. *Entre nous*, I believe it will be the effect, no uncommon one, of jealousy; and that my evident *tendre* will do much in awaking her's."

Some time elapsed ere I again heard from Mrs. Sydney, and when I did so, there was in the tone of her letter a shade of gravity and a total absence of her usual good-humoured *badingge*; which, coupled as it was with utter silence on the subject nearest our hearts, and that indescribable tone of compassionate sympathy, involuntarily assumed by one who is ere long to be the herald of disap-

pointment, chilled my very blood, and gave rise to a thousand vague presentiments of misfortune.

They were but too well founded. The tender and yet precarious plants of esteem and good-will, which, under the fostering care of Mrs. Sydney, were begining to take root slowly but surely in the heart of Pauline, were about to be exposed to the malign influence of a rivalry of the most formidable description.

From the first moment indeed of Miss Clitheroe's arrival under the hospitable roof of Mrs. Sydney Hume, there had not been wanting admirers of the modest dignity, and unaffected loveliness of her English *protégée*; and the social ease with which the advancing season enabled lingerers in town to mingle at her truly *attic soirées*, was but too favourable to the development of talents and graces which would have shrunk abashed from the broad glare of fashionable life. It was with all a mother's exultation that Mrs. Sydney at first wrote to me that I had good cause for jealousy, since the poets, philosophers, and sages of the modern Athens, now only frequented the shrine of their ancient hostess, to transfer their homage with shameless inconstancy to her youthful guest. "And yet," would she

playfully add, “ I know not by what spells (youth and beauty excepted,) the gipsy seduces away my liege subjects, unless it be by what she certainly possesses, ‘ *un grand talent pour le silence*’—not in the ironical sense in which it was used by the witty Frenchman of our tongue-tied countryman—but in its higher and more complimentary meaning of a first-rate listener. Some people only listen with their ears, and that but asininely, after all. Pauline’s eyes tell me as plainly across the room, (when *I* too am assisting my ears after mine own fashion, with spectacles on nose,) what subject the wise or witty swain beside her is expatiating on, as if I heard the bit of antiquarian lore, or scrap of Scottish anecdote, or burning relic of jacobite loyalty, which the lips of our most privileged *littérateurs* are pouring into her ‘ravished ears.’ And this is the charm which lays them bound in willing durance at the feet of my little self-educated heroine ; whose delightful freshness of character, and eager thirst for knowledge, are to the strained optics of these consumers of midnight oil, like the repose of green fields and cool waters.”

All this I could hear, and with no feelings save of enhanced admiration for Pauline, and occasional

envy of her distinguished entertainers. Put I knew not then why my heart died within me, when in a hurried postscript to one of her delightful epistles, Mrs. Sydney playfully remarked, that I had surely been spreading her* fame among my countrymen; as a second young Englishman had introduced himself to her, and oddly enough, also through some connexion with the Clitheroes, though, added my lively correspondent, “not like your’s, of a romantic nature. A vulgar affair of pounds, shillings, and pence, is the basis of this young man’s northern pilgrimage; but vulgar as it is, not less to his honour perhaps, than wooing damsels, and propitiating old ladies.”

“Heaven forbid *he* should do either!” ejaculated I, more annoyed than I could well account for, by the arrival of a youthful interloper on the, to me, alas! little more than neutral ground of Pauline’s good graces. From this period he was never out of my mind’s eye; he haunted my walks by day, and my dreams by night. I could have quarrelled with Mrs. Sydney for not describing him, and perhaps banishing by an unvarnished enumeration of common-place attributes, the “unreal mockery” of a terribly good-looking puppy with which I was

ominously visited. His errand too, that cost me a world of idle speculation. Not all the hoards of the American doctor, while yet unrealized, had ever taxed my powers of computation, like the “pounds, shillings, and pence” of my for once laconic correspondent. I knew too well of what consequence were those vulgar appendages to the comfort, nay, existence of a slenderly pensioned veteran ; and yet, it was not here, after all, that my jealous fancies found their bitterest nutriment. Riches, something more tangible than Fancy whispered, would never have weight with Pauline. Of this I was a living and still smarting witness, and welcome now was the conviction thus dearly earned.

Mrs. Sydney wrote no more for a length of time, but she was not *now* my sole correspondent ; and from one less tender of my feelings, because less deep in my confidence, I extorted ere long, that in the few public haunts yet open to Edinburgh loungers, Pauline was attended, as by her shadow, by the young English traveller.

This young man, whose name was Walsingham, I found out (from more channels than I should have dreamt of exploring to gain the philosopher’s stone) had traced Captain Clitheroe from Manches-

ter, with the honourable design of refunding a trifling sum of money which the open-hearted and open-handed veteran had many years before, when paymaster of a marching regiment, advanced to his father ; among whose papers, an acknowledgment, though of an irregular and merely private nature, had, it seems, been found on his death on foreign service.

The debt, among many others of a similar description, had been long since forgotten by the generous lender, though it was not the less welcome in his present difficulties, nor the restitution the less likely to serve as a passport to the good-will of one peculiarly alive to sentiments of honour. But there were other ties which insensibly attached the veteran to this new friend. The acquaintance with his father, though slight, had taken place during the brighter days of their mutual youth ; and his memory was identified with vicissitudes of glory and privation, which a soldier can never look back upon unmoved.

Young Walsingham resembled his father, and had, like him, started in the military profession ; though a love for scientific pursuits, and the succession to a moderate fortune from an uncle, had

induced him to relinquish it. Since quitting the army, his time had been chiefly improved in travel; and as at that period the southern part of Europe lay under an interdict, he had indemnified himself by a prolonged *sejour* in the comparatively barbarous north.

Of Petersburg, (whence he had recently returned) Walsingham spoke, I was told, with eloquent admiration; and his rambles through regions then little frequented, imparted to his narrations an interest, the effects of which were but too visible in the increasing partiality of Captain Clitheroe, and the pleased attention of his accomplished daughter. "In short," wrote my college comrade, reckless of the pain he was unconsciously inflicting, "all your acquaintance have set down as infallible, that papa, being won already by a *coup de main*, Miss Clitheroe's hitherto insensible heart will yield to the united influence of a very handsome person, fascinating manners, and entertaining talk; and, above all, an immediate home, and dutiful son-in-law, for her good old uncle Toby of a father."

"Pooh," I exclaimed, relieved by the latter and seemingly most formidable clause of the enumeration, "these, heaven knows, might have been

his long ere now, and failed to tempt her ; and if they sufficed not to make her mine, why should another thus lure her from me ? But then that other's character and acquirements—*there* lay the alarming disparity. What chance had the neglected idler Meredith, just beginning late in life the task of mental discipline, with the staid, the bookish, the accomplished Walsingham ? of whom no one could say a word amiss ; the ‘ charming young man ’ of the indiscriminating gay world, the *enfant gâté* of the blue stocking coteries of Edinburgh ?

“ By heaven ! I'll know what Mrs. Sydney thinks of him, before I'm a day older,” exclaimed I ; “ from her ominous silence I augur that though she may fear, she at least does not approve him. And yet he is all that she ought naturally to think highly of ; and she is too upright to let partiality for me blind or distort her acute intellectual vision. She'll tell me the *truth*, be it what it may, however, and that is better a thousand times than suspense and inuendoes.”

In the midst of these agitations came the letter (to which I have before alluded) from my dear old friend, the sadly negative character of which confirmed my worst fears, and goaded me on to instant

investigation. Under its influence I penned a string of queries, as much extorted by the rack of mental agony as ever were responses by inquisitorial torture, and awaited the result in a mood not much to be envied by a candidate for the honours of an *auto da f *.

“ Your catechism, my dear Edmund,” wrote my kind Mentor, in a hand less steady than usual, and a tone which strove vainly for its wonted dash of pleasantry, “ is one not easily answered ; and, like a puzzled truant, fain would I merge all the ‘ previous questions’ I can so ill reply to in my decided response to the last and most important one, of whether you shall instantly fly to Edinburgh, to grapple in person with the danger, (alas ! not altogether a chimerical one) with which your long-nursed hopes are menaced ? Stay where you are, Edmund. I say so on conviction, that if you are to triumph, as I hope and trust you will, over a very specious, and by no means despicable rival, it will be by the unbiassed influence of Pauline’s excellent judgment, aided, you may believe, by whatever of lynx-eyed discrimination I may have owed to threescore year’s familiarity with an evil world.

“ The dear captain, a boy to me in age, is still

more so in character ; and an old comrade's son, with a tongue of unrivalled glibness, and a face of unequalled smoothness, and aameleon-like facility of reflecting every ray that crosses, like an autumnal gleam, an old veteran's brow—are more than he well knows how to resist, in favour of an absent civilian, the acquaintance of a few short weeks, and whom these did not entirely enable him to separate from a certain spendthrift heir-at-law, whom the fates sent, very *mal à propos* between him (or rather his darling daughter), and a rich succession. So much for my brother's late ancient ; as worthy a gentleman of the old school notwithstanding, as ever mistook plausibility for perfection.

“ Mrs. Clitheroe remains, like myself, stanch to her *pauvre garçon* ; that is, in her sober moments, (if she ever has such,) and when her imagination is not worked upon by the Hyperborean marvels of her entertaining son-in-law elect, or her soft heart won by his disinterested devotion to her now portionless, and as he pretends, all the more desirable, daughter.

“ It is edifying to see how, when she touches on the disappointment of their golden dreams, Joseph Surface (as I have somewhat uncharitably christen-

ed him,) puts on, nay actually succeeds in investing with every characteristic of absolute reality, a satisfaction which it seems impossible for a sensible man to feel, and needless for an honest one to feign. I have watched closely the smile, or rather chuckle, which the subject usually calls forth on his really good-looking face ; and can only say that the man (yourself excepted, and *you* had a selfish reason,) who can ‘ smile and smile,’ as he does on such an occasion, must either be the most romantically disinterested of mortals, or, according to glorious Will’s set of it, ‘ a villain.’ But there is no room for villainy in the present case ; unless, indeed, it be in my gratuitous suppositions at the expense of a well-behaved and altogether unexceptionable young man, as much surpassing in all these respects the scape grace of *my* predilection—but comparisons are odious, and what signify an old woman’s ? What says, and what thinks Pauline ?

“ It is the lot of the dear girl, as it is of all women, who, in despite of Pope, ‘ have characters at all,’ to puzzle my old head a good deal, with her always amiable, though sometimes unaccountable fancies. She has had, ever since her rejection of

your suit, ‘compunctious visitings’ on the score of the anxieties its acceptance would have removed from her father’s breast. She sees him so thoroughly taken with this new favourite, sunning himself so complacently in the reflected emotions of his younger and happier days, (while every look and wish of the veteran are anticipated by the disinterested attentions of a very handsome and highly gifted person, one, too, whose moderate fortune and views harmonize admirably with her own subdued desires and sober inclinations,) that we must not wonder, nay, my dear Edmund, we must not blame a daughter accustomed from earliest childhood to sacrifice personal considerations to a parent’s comfort, if she listens (and she does no more) to devotion enforced by every charm of polished eloquence, and well-feigned diffidence, and masterly adaptation to every—*weak*, shall I say? (No! my Pauline has no weak points,) but to the easily predominant features of a character, of which openness forms the prevailing charm.

“Whether she will ever do more than listen, heaven, my dear Meredith, only knows. One thing *you* know, and from experience, bitter at the time, but invaluable now—that if won, it will not be easily

or lightly. Pauline will know, and know thoroughly, him to whom she resigns her freedom ; and I live in hopes that if—as I secretly believe, without well knowing why—there is a snake in the grass of this smooth-spoken, pattern young man’s very persevering addresses, Providence, which has hitherto so marvellously watched over you, will detect it, and rescue you both.

“ I see on reading over my letter, that my own opinion of your rival may be pretty well anticipated ; and that I am saved the shame of avowing an antipathy too much akin to the ‘ I do not like thee, Dr. Fell,’ to be very creditable to a judgment of threescore. Except that he stands in the way of one I *do* like, (*why* it would equally puzzle me to explain,) I could not give one reason for disliking Walsingham which would pass muster in a court of equity. Barring such heresies as admiration of the French, till he found that we were all on principle and opinion determined anti-gallicans, and abuse of snuff, which he at once abjured at sight of my beautiful enamelled *tabatiere*—I really cannot charge him with any peccadillo of even microscopic minuteness. His sins are all of omission ; and for these, nature must be accounta-

ble. She neglected to preside at his birth, and truly he returns the compliment by forgetting her very existence. I don't think he knows a tree from a broomstick ; or sun-rise from sun-set, but by the Almanack. ' Man made the town,' as Cowper says, and this is enough for him ; and he first woke my spleen by pronouncing Edinburgh sadly inferior to Petersburg, because the houses, God wot ! were not on the same princely scale. Of the comparative beauty of the sites he thought as little as I of Heecuba. The marshes of the Neva, stuck full of piles, could carry palaces as well as our sweet smiling valley of the Forth ; and as for Arthur's Seat, I question if he knew it from a *Montagne Russe* of the *Boulevards* !

“ But my knight-errantry about nature must not, and shall not make me unjust. Walsingham is an agreeable, and seems an amiable person. His sentiments are all highly creditable to him, his morals unimpeachable, his manners a thorough gentleman's ; and for these very things, God forgive me ! I find it hard to forgive *him*. But my opinion is—I am apt to forget—a secondary consideration. All I can say of Pauline (would it were more consolatory,) is, that she ap-

proves, nay perhaps admires Walsingham—if she does more, time and his not very distant declaration will decide. *Entre nous*, for a parting ray of the hope I am too sanguine to relinquish—I have seen her blush deeper at one paragraph where her name occurred in a letter from Hemsworth, than at all his high-flown and rather hyperbolical compliments. Keep a good heart, Edmund ! that rosy flag seems to say you have yet a friend in the citadel. For the care of the outworks you may trust your stanch and ancient ally.

SYDNEY HUME.”

CHAPTER XVI.

To deck the shapely knoll
That softly swell'd and gaily dress'd appears
A flow'ry island, from the dark green lawn
Emerging—must be deem'd a labour due
To no mean hand, and asks the touch of taste.

COWPER.

It was but a short time that I had to endure the agonies of a suspense almost beyond my new-born philosophy. Another and a joyous epistle from Mrs. Hume thus began :—

“ From my heart do I congratulate you, my dear Meredith, on your reinstatement in the Engman’s boasted privilege of a ‘clear field!’ Your rival is *hors de combat* : thanks to an interposition, which Pauline justly deems providential, and which has put an end at once to all conflict

between her inclinations, (which she now confesses never were with him,) and the sense of duty, which might nevertheless have possibly made her his.

“A few days ago, a lady of my acquaintance—blue enough, *entre nous*, to have matched Mrs. Montague—whose house is the rendezvous of all the men of deep science whom chance brings to Edinburgh—(*I* only harbour poets, and prodigals, and such like unprofitable gentry,)—invited me, and Pauline of course, to a staring match at two newly arrived French *savans*: whom the long cessation of intercourse during the war had rendered no contemptible lions in our modern Athens—not a whit less addicted to the hunt after ‘some new thing,’ than her Grecian namesake of old. Walsingham was included in the party; and from his fluent French was soon pounced on by our hostess as interpreter to, and special attendant on the men of quadrants and chronometers.

“Pauline, as she told me with tears of gratitude in her eyes—was quietly turning over the prints of Denon’s splendid work on Egypt—a present from the French Institute to some of its Edinburgh members, when her quick ear for French enabled her involuntarily to pick up, (in the course

of a geological discussion with the strangers,) such startling admissions of incredulity in Revelation on the part of the hitherto cautious Walsingham—such thoroughly Frenchified professions of citizenship of the world, and superiority to nursery prejudices, as sufficed to raise in a moment the mask under which this admirable actor had supported, with well nigh fatal success, the good boy character at a primitive English fireside.

“I had been engaged elsewhere, and my attention was first called to something particular by looking over Pauline, and seeing her fixed in deep and apparently unconscious contemplation of the great Pyramid of Ghiza, standing on its head like a harlequin, with its huge base sprawling unsupported in the air. ‘Do turn that print round, Pauline,’ said I, tapping her upon the shoulder; ‘it looks so unmercifully unnatural.’

“*“Ce n’est pas la première tête apparemment, que Mademoiselle aura bouleversée!”* said one of the Frenchmen, with the trite gallantry of his nation; glancing from the startled Pauline to the evidently enamoured Walsingham. Not the unconscious marble of centuries could more coldly

receive either the stranger's idle compliment, or the lover's smiling commentary on it.

“ ‘ Take me away, dear Mrs. Sydney,’ whispered she, as soon as she could find words ; ‘ I have made a blessed discovery, and would fain breathe freely upon it.’ She threw herself on my neck in the carriage, and told me what she had heard—with horror, no doubt, and gratitude for possible escape—but believe me, Edmund, with no marks of regret which it could have pained even *you* to witness. If I had ever suspected her heart to be engaged in the cause, that first burst of relief would have undeceived me. Had she married him, duty, and duty alone, would have been her prompter.

“ Next morning—before her altered sentiments had any opportunity to display themselves—Walsingham, (urged on probably by the open admiration of the Gallie arbiters of taste,) solicited and obtained his decisive audience of Pauline. He tendered her his hand with an air of confidence which would have banished all regret,—could she under the circumstances have felt any,—in its unequivocal rejection.

“ For this he was utterly unprepared ; and Pauline, (who confessed to me that she had always somehow distrusted the genuineness of his attachment,) was equally unprepared for the vehemence of despair with which her negative was received. Indeed it was not till more than once peremptorily reiterated, that it would be received at all ; and then, another glimpse of the cloven foot came forth, in the outrageous burst of angry disappointment rather than sorrow, with which the overthrow of his well-founded hopes, as he called them, was deprecated. Something like threats, and not of continued persecution alone, mingled in the storm of unhallowed passion which shook the smooth-spoken Walsingham’s soul beyond all power of dissimulation.

“ He succeeded at least in so frightening Pauline, that her only thought was how to effect her escape. This she did at last, a good deal shaken in nerves, but thoroughly grateful ; and fully disposed to view in delightful contrast with this smothered volcano, a lover who, whatever his faults may be, wears them at least, like his heart, on his sleeve.

“ P. S. Since I wrote the above, there has been

a letter from Walsingham; so full of eloquence and penitence and propriety—so nearly akin, in short, to the song of the Syrens—that had Pauline not heard his avowal of principles and witnessed his explosion of temper, she might have been beguiled by its witchery.

“There are mysterious hints in it too of some great personal advantage which, by an obstinate rejection of his suit, she may chance to forfeit, or at least indefinitely postpone. On this score you may keep yourself easy, for if the doctor’s thousands and your own which you gallantly laid at her feet, failed to tempt her—I think she is proof against bribery and corruption.

“But, to be serious, should you renew your suit some little time hence, when her spirits are less harassed by removal, and her father’s precarious condition, I can scarcely doubt its favourable reception. Her father, independent of his predilection in your favour, naturally pines to see her consigned to the protection of a husband, while her mother, who has regarded you from the day you so oddly met, with somewhat of my *girlish* love at first sight—sighs when *le pauvre garçon* is mentioned, in a way that would soften a harder heart than Pauline’s.

They talk of settling somewhere in the south of England, to recruit, by mild climate, the Captain's shattered frame. Suppose, when they are fairly fixed, you should run across the island from your western paradise, and sue in person? I am vain enough of my pupil and protégé, to think such ocular demonstration may do much for you; for if Pauline is an amended edition of what she was when I first knew her, so I am sure is my hermit of Hemsworth."

That I was elated, beyond the sobrieties of hermit existence, by these favourable prognostics, no one will doubt who knows the effect of flattery on man, or hope on a desponding lover. I should certainly have crossed the country immediately, in all probability before those I sought had arrived, and certainly prematurely for my own purpose, had I not been restrained from yielding to the call of love, by the still small voice of friendship and gratitude.

One of the chief pleasures I looked forward to at Hemsworth, was the visit of Mrs. Sydney, and one of her chief enjoyments I knew was an old-fashioned, shady, irregular garden. Now, though there might have been gardens at Hemsworth for aught I knew since the flood, and from relics yet

discernible, stately ones too, yet the space formerly appropriated to the purpose was, on my arrival, a mere shapeless wilderness, capable enough no doubt of being cleared into a methodical modern affair of asparagus beds and trim borders, but far more difficult to reinstate in a picturesque condition of “most admired disorder,” of mingled grove and bowling-green—of tangled alleys, and fairy bowers, and velvet turf, and over-arching shades—just, in short, what a garden must have been in gardening’s golden age, what I had read of in Milton, and admired at Glen Falconar.

On the latter delightful garden, the favourite haunt of Mrs. Sydney, I modelled my operations, and here, for the only time since I grew prudent, I made money gild the wings of time, and labour anticipate the work of years.

The old defaced bowling-green, whose scattered bits of emerald turf alone revealed its former destination, I again clothed with a short velvet carpet from a neighbouring common; and so little had improvements of a merely tasteful description been heard of at Hemsworth, perhaps for centuries, that I do not believe a greater sensation was excited by the locomotion of “Birnam Wood,” (the site of

which I had seen when in Scotland,) than by the progress of part of the sheep-nibbled surface of Needham Down to the *new garden* at Hems-worth.

The draining of a swamp, which now usurped the rest of the space, cost me more trouble; but, like a skilful improver, I availed myself of its very impracticability, to embellish my garden with a glassy pond, for whose appropriate fringe of weeping willows and other aquatics, the soil retained but too much “eternal fitness.”

The chief feature, a rare one, of beauty in the garden at Glen Falconar, consisted in the intrusion, perhaps centuries back, within its precincts of certain gigantic forest trees, which repaid in majesty and shade, what they unquestionably appropriated in space and nourishment, and from amid whose deepening shadows the graceful flower-knots rose, like constellations on a midnight sky. I never remember seeing, except at Glen Falconar, this beautiful combination of the forest's dignity with the parterre's smile. It was there purely accidental, the stately trees, chiefly denizens of more southern forests, such as Spanish chesnuts, limes, and walnuts—having been, it was surmised, originally in-

roduced as tender nurslings within the privileged precincts, whose shelter they now repaid a thousand fold.

There were not, and never had been, forest trees in the garden, properly so called, at Hemsworth. But the happy circumstance of an extension of front which had nearly doubled the length of the house, had given rise to the anomaly of an avenue, or rather the stately relics of one, originally leading to the centre of the mansion, but now exiled as it were, by the hand of innovation to one end of the building, and consequently, quite capable of being appropriated and included within the bounds of my enlarged garden, extending along the whole front of the house. From the noble remaining oaks and elms, which, for the benefit apparently of the rooks, had escaped former devastation, I selected, by a few reluctant sacrifices, some dozen or so of broad-armed patriarchal trees, equal at least in picturesque effect to their rivals at Glen Falconar; and no one (who has not tried the experiment,) would believe how unformal, and unlike their pristine stiffness, when dressing up in line—the veterans looked, when thus reduced to a desultory gossiping group by the hand of judicious improvement.

For the flower-beds which were to complete the picture, I must needs wait till spring should smile on my labours ; and having now put all in trim for an agreeable surprise to my dear old friend on her arrival, Fancy would people my Eden with another and younger Eve ; and I resolved (though with more misgivings “ than were dreamt of in my philosophy,” when I first put the question at Manchester,) to renew, on the strength of Mrs. Sydney’s encouragement, my proposals to Pauline.

I had made up my mind to set out next day, and after reiterating with a minuteness, I leave others to account for, my instructions to the carpenters (who by the mere demolition of partitions, and annihilation of closets and cupboards, had contrived to give me a very good house,) about the finishing and decorations of the *lady’s bower* before mentioned, the Oriel chamber, as it was called, with the three delightful windows—I gave myself up to a delirious reverie, on awaking from which, I mechanically took up the yet unopened London newspaper.

My eye, as it wandered listlessly over the fate of empires, then hanging on the breath of daily rumour, was caught, I scarce know how, by the words

“ Extensive failure.” I read on, I know not why, and became aware, ere I had finished the paragraph, of the utter ruin, and hopeless insolvency of my late guardian and present banker, Mr. G—— ! This was a shock the more severe, because, thanks to my inexperience, entirely unforeseen by myself ; though warier individuals had withdrawn their confidence ever since that ominous launch into west-end splendours and associations, which had exalted my guardian in my unthinking esteem and favour.

“ Farewell, a long farewell” to wealth, to improvements, and, in my first bitterness of feeling, I exclaimed—to Pauline ! For circumstances (which I have omitted to mention, because at the time I was in no mood to attach importance to them.) connected with American legislation, and the chicane which is of *all* countries, rendered the ultimate recovery of the Doctor’s funds a matter of doubtful, or at best, distant speculation. The certificate of propinquity given to my mother by Caesar, was, it seems, neutralized by a judicial declaration of the old negro that he had been since present at the signature of a paper by his master and a stranger gentleman, who came to seek hospitality from him in the woods ; and as this night,

and not improbably, be a will, the law demurred as to putting the nearest of kin, (even supposing me to be such,) into premature possession. The failure in memory of the superannuated domestics, and consequent indistinctness of their testimony, threw fresh doubts on the subject ; and if Mrs. Sydney did not visit me till she had administered my funds in that Utopian quarter, it was little likely she should come at all.

Here, then, was the heir to untold thousands reduced, and probably for life, to the paltry domain and scanty revenues of Hemsworth, that pittance of some L.300 per annum, which I had hardly deemed worthy of a moment's care or notice ; and had long looked on rather as an incumbrance than an advantage. This no doubt was susceptible of yet farther improvement, and would suffice for my wants as habit had lately circumscribed them. But Pauline, were she even, as love *would* whisper, capable of condescending to share this vegetative existence, (for those whom gold cannot buy, its absence can seldom appal) how could *I* make the proposal, or even endure the thought ? How could I ask her to share, after her rejection in more prosperous times, a lot but one step removed above

the penury which she had unrepiningly borne under the strong influence of filial affection? She who, when released from the obscurity to which duty condemned her, had but to shew herself to be admired, appreciated, and exalted into some lofty and congenial sphere?

I felt it was all over, and tried to resign myself. But I think the effort with which I weaned my mind from its long-cherished visions, and mounted, to unravel the mazes of fraud and dishonesty, the horse which had been well-nigh saddled to bear me in quest of happiness and Pauline, was the most painful of my life.

If my success in this far more ignoble pursuit might be taken as any criterion of what would have attended me in the other, nothing could have been more discouraging. So far from any reversion appearing likely to accrue from the settlement of my banker's affairs, he was *minus* to an amount which left the most shrewd of his sage suspects far behind the mark. By a system then new, but since become familiar to the public, of unlimited and unsuspected forgeries, he had for years back lived *en prince* with the sword of Damocles (but in the less aristocratic shape of an halter) suspended over

his head. He was off, ere the alarm was given, to the resort of such adepts—America ; and such was my instinctive dread of his dexterity and fertility in expedient, that I no sooner heard it than I half fancied, in spite of the proverbial tenacity of the law, the doctor's hoards, by some *hocus pocus* or other, transferred to his possession.

I returned, dispirited, far beyond what mere loss of wealth I hope could now have made me, to my future and sole home at Hemsworth. How was that really pretty, and hourly embellishing spot altered in my eyes since it had become likely to be for ever the lone hermitage I had so cheerfully inhabited *tête-a-tête* with Hope.

However, there is in a healthy young mind, unbroken by a course of misfortune, a powerful spring of vigour and elasticity. “ I must not disappoint Mrs. Sydney,” said I, as I sat down to write her as manly and collected an account as I could of the annihilation of my fortune and hopes. I told her, and I think truly, that in the whole business it was Pauline, and Pauline chiefly, I regretted. That as to myself, I had never felt more independent then since the last nine months had taught me how little a young man in health required to make

him, not only comfortable, but positively happy. That the improvements I had begun for amusement, I must now continue for subsistence; and that I reckoned myself lucky in my Fortunatus's purse having lasted long enough to put me in possession of a house, not unworthy of her promised visit (which, as it would now be one of charity, I felt surer of than ever) and of a garden in which she, fastidious as I knew her to be on the subject, might condescend to ramble.

“Do come,” I added, “my dear Mrs. Sydney, and heal the wounds of your pupil with your invaluable practical wisdom. I cannot promise that you will find a philosopher. Alas! it requires more than even disappointed ambition or blighted love to make one; but I hope you will find a man, and a Christian, concluding that ‘whatever is, is best,’ and even able honestly to rejoice that he has been saved from involving one dearer in a life of penury and privation.

I now became a farmer in good earnest, reserving the minor details of the ornamental department for occasional and hard-earned luxuries. My **neighbours**, who had been shy and suspicious of the **rich dandy improver**, turning every thing topsy

turvy to gratify what they supposed a temporary whim, crowded to assist and encourage the shipwrecked novice, stranded among them by reverse of fortune. My acres were ploughed, as if by magic, by a *levée en masse* of the three next parishes; valuable aid, and hints more valuable still, poured on me from all quarters. I don't think there was a calf in the parish that was not pressed on my acceptance, nor a henroost in the hundred that was not taxed to assist in stocking the young gentleman's.

This (as I ought perhaps to abstain from mentioning, save that it would otherwise savour of romance,) arose, no doubt, from my having, in my wealthier days, conciliated the good folks, by doing all the good my limited experience in the ways of benevolence would permit, and always making up in civility and courtesy for what might be deficient in other respects. This, from a supposed *millionaire*, a dandy, and a Londoner, had, it seems, gone a prodigious way with the rustics, and they were not slow in returning it when the hour of need arrived.

All this was gratifying. It was an honest gratification, and I felt it the more. Mrs. Sydney

wrote me a letter, the balm of whose precious Christian eloquence would have ministered to a mind far more diseased than mine, and healed wounds far more envenomed than those of fortune. Yet still, there were moments when the sense of all I had lost by my guardian's iniquity and my own imprudence, sat deeply and heavily on my mind ; when, for days together, I would listlessly suspend my agricultural experiments, and the liberal studies with which, during a severe winter, I had filled up their intervals, to muse despondingly upon the "vanity and vexation" of companionless pursuits, and exertions uncheered by a goal.

CHAPTER XVII.

Thus through all climes, to earth's remotest goal,
 From burning Indus to the frozen pole,
 In chaises or on floats,
 In dillies and in boats,
 Now on a camel's native stool,
 Now on an ass, now on a mule,
 Nabobs and Rajahs I have seen,
 Mahomet's tomb, Killarney's lake, the fane of Ammon,
 And all thy kings and queens, great Mrs. Salmon!

Probationary Ode, said to be by

SIR N. WRAXALL.

As spring, with all its delightful accompaniments, developed in a totally new light the astonishing metamorphosis of my dwelling, when all I had only hitherto seen in "my mind's eye," burst in life and beauty on my bodily sense, my spirits (a common effect I believe with all who are sick

at heart,) sunk, instead of rising in unison with nature's *reveillé*. I could have chid the flowers for blooming when there were none to admire, and the birds for stunning with melody the "dull cold ear" of sorrow.

I was pacing, in just such a desolate mood, on one of the loveliest of April afternoons, the velvet turf under the old oaks in my garden, thinking how like the pure white lilies which rose gracefully beneath their spreading shade, were to somebody who was seldom out of my mind, when I was startled from my reverie by the most unwonted sound of wheels on the gravel at the other side of the house. I shrunk with all the shyness of a recluse from the idea of some intrusion of business, or well-meant civility, and lingered in the garden in the hope of being denied by my sole servants, the *now* smart serviceable Dick, and able Amazonian Deborah, when the glass door entering from the ground floor was hastily thrown open, and I beheld—no words can express with what transports of delighted surprise—the stately figure of Mrs. Sydney Hume, in its characteristic equipment of hood and cardinal, her delicate high-heeled shoes treading at length thus unexpectedly the carpet

expressly destined for their accommodation, and her face beaming with the well-remembered smile of benevolence which could “create a soul under the very ribs” of melancholy itself.

I flew to meet her, and this time it was not her hand alone I kissed in the exuberance of my delight. She returned the salute on both sides of the face, in a style that left all the *accolades* of chivalry hopelessly behind, and exclaimed, with her usual playful *badinage*,—“Hail! holy Hermit of Hemsworth! as with ‘alliteration’s artful aid,’ I am enabled to call thee, and” (with a sudden change to the most maternal seriousness of expression,) “*I trust for the last time—unless,*” again archly smiling, “you have forsworn the world, and taken an eternal vow of celibacy. But while still a hermit and a bachelor, mine you are to all intents and purposes; and you shall do the honours of your hermitage, and invite me to a share of your bread and cresses, of which (glancing at the pond,) I see you have a pretty provision, before I unfold, with diplomatic gravity, the particulars of my mission.”

“You have a design upon my wits surely, my dear Mrs. Sydney,” cried I, “that you thus deal

in riddles. One thing only I know, that while I have a house over my head, you are welcome to it, as the flowers in May. Do step in, and take some refreshment, and let me recover from this unexpected apparition if I can, and persuade myself you are really here, and here on no delusive errand, else I do not know you so well as I think I do."

"A legitimate conclusion, my dear son, though not very logically expressed; but we'll dispense with grammar on the occasion. And now restore your maiden visitor to the expecting, and no doubt wondering optics of her duenna, Alice Pinnock, whom this attack upon a young gentleman's premises has not a little disconcerted, notwithstanding our joint elopement eighteen months ago."

I led my old friend, with the respect I would have paid a queen, and the affection I *could* have felt for a mother—towards the house. She turned ere she entered it, and said, most feelingly—"A paradise truly, Edmund; and all the more so, as I predicted, for being your own achieving. My blessing be on the threshold I am about to enter! I trust it will be mine to leave more than a verbal one behind me."

It was after a collation, the best Deborah's some-

what amended larder could furnish, and in the full enjoyment of a glorious sunset from the prettiest of the three windows of the now tastefully fitted up Oriel chamber, that Mrs. Sydney told me the following marvellous, yet not the less veracious history of the last six weeks.

“ You must know, holy father, and most courteous host,” began the lively narratress, “ that I felt, in the expressive language of our old chronicles, ‘ ill at ease,’ ever since the receipt of a certain letter of yours, which, while it demolished in my eyes your worldly prospects, not a little exalted your moral and intellectual character in my esteem. When any of my children, or pets, or lovers, and they (I don’t of course include the last) are pretty numerous—meet with misfortunes, I have an ill trick of losing my night’s rest ; and after trying the old experiment of the beautiful Scheherezade, and resorting to the Arabian nights, not for life, but for a nap, in vain, I took the magnanimous resolution of playing the part of the fairy Benigna, and going south to see if I could do any thing in the business.

“ I had a glorious excuse for this piece of Quixotism. The finances of good Captain Clitheroe,

who was still, I heard, detained at Manchester by some vexatious windings up of accounts, would not admit of his going south so comfortably and leisurely as his shattered health made desirable. Now, I had a good roomy post-chaise rotting in the coach-house ever since our memorable expedition to Glen Falconar, and what could I possibly do better than get my dear chum and quondam lover Jamie G—— to prescribe a jaunt for me, and offer the Captain and his family a commodious equipage instead of the jolting machines, miscalled chaises, on the road. My antediluvian vehicle was, I knew, made to hold four ; and Pauline could sit at my feet and smile in my face as she had done six years before, when I brought her to Scotland ; or if the weather proved fine, she might heal Alice's wounded dignity by sharing her seat on the box, and explain to her the difference between ' parks ' in England and ' parks ' in Scotland.

“ The matter was easily settled ; I picked up my live freight in good case, and we jogged merrily together to our journey's end. I don't know that I should say merrily, for Pauline was very thoughtful, as she had been ever since I told her of your loss, and read her your letter ; but I was

determined to say nothing, and leave the thoughts I saw working in her mind to their own spontaneous course. I laid a like padlock on the overflowing lips of her father and mother ; and besought them not even to *look in their daughter's face* (like the parents in my cousin's pathetic ballad of Auld Robin Gray) until I gave them leave. If esteem, and sympathy, and disinterestedness *were* to gain the victory over maiden pride and punctilio, I was determined they should do it unaided by any one ; and so, thank God, they have done.

“ When we got to Dover, which, from some of those early and inexplicable associations with scenes of excitement and gladness that haunt a veteran's evening hours, the Captain preferred to more romantic retreats—we took a fantastic, but of course admirably *sheltered* cottage, scooped out of the very cliff by the hand of an enterprising sailor ; and were not long settled in it ere the mild sea-breezes, and total exemption from all harassing cares, set the good old soldier quite upon his legs again.

“ With every stride he made towards amendment, Pauline visibly brightened ; but there was that within which still pained while it gladdened me to behold. I would not have missed that beautiful

struggle between desire to confer happiness and atone error, and genuine maiden reluctance now when ‘unwooed to^e be won,’ for an empire; no not even to be some weeks sooner the witness and har-binger of felicity. I was, however, meditating the interposition I saw Pauline began to despair of, when I was saved the trouble by a most opportune and decisive event.

“We had been attracted one mild balmy morning to the usual resort of Dover idlers, the pier, by the arrival of that long suspended source of interest, a Calais packet, when from amid its motley crew there stepped out a figure only wanting a few inches added to his huge umbrella straw hat, and a rusty gun over his shoulder, to be the very beau ideal of my dear friend Robinson Crusoe, (whose identical gigantic fowling-piece, by the way, I can’t resist telling you, has been over mine.) Not more tanned in physiognomy, or more grotesque in habiliments, or more unlike the rest of the species, could that worthy brother hermit of your’s, fresh from Juan Fernandez, have been, than this original, straight in all probability from Paris; for it was just after peace was signed, and the *taboo* removed from that mart of the graces.

“The good man was staring round him about as much at a loss as Robinson might have been in his place, and I, (whose age permits many violations of etiquette, *exempli gratiae*, this visit,) stood suspended like Mahomet’s mountain between maiden punctilio and compassion for his perplexity. When I saw him marched off with a whole cargo of non-descript appendages, in triumph to the custom-house, I envied its myrmidons their investigation ; for, as Jacques says of penitent princes, ‘there’s much of matter’ in your peripatetic philosophers ; and moccasin, snow-shoe, or sandal, here was a foot evidently at home in them all !

“I was sitting, as you know is my wont, when my ‘recreant limbs’ refuse to second my spirit of adventure—at the open window of our rock-hewn domicile, enjoying the lovely evening which my more active friends were making the most of abroad, when I saw pacing, ‘*pour se descennuyer*,’ in front of our singular abode, the very original who had so much excited my curiosity in the morning. His seemed to be no less awakened by the odd construction and unique site of our nest in the cliff, and he looked round for some one to give him its history. A drummer off duty was beating the devil’s tattoo

in dignified idleness on the parapet of our Lilliputian demesne ; and in answer to the unceremonious inquiry of, ‘ Pray, my lad, who the devil scooped out that whimsical rabbit-burrow ?’ I heard him reply, ‘ It belongs to Sir S—— S——, I’ve been told, Sir ; but one Captain Clitheroe lives there just now.’

“ ‘ Clitheroe, did you say ?’ repeated the stranger, ‘ Clitheroe ! well, that’s odd enough ; I’ve a great mind to knock at the door and see if the man here happens to know anything about his namesake. It’s a long way to go on a cold scent, and staying to be ruined in a Dover hotel till I could write, worse still.’

“ While he was thus hesitating and communing after the fashion of solitary wanderers, with himself, the Captain’s servant lad, (a *cidevant* filer) attracted probably by professional sympathy towards the drubber of parchment, strolled out to reconnoître. The stranger availed himself of the circumstance to ask if any of the family were at home ; the lad answered by showing him in, and it was with something of the mingled fright and gratification I remember experiencing as a child, when a lion’s cub was laid in my lap at a menagerie, that I found

myself tete-a-tete with the ourang outang I had ogled so decidedly at a distance.

“ ‘ Ma’am,’ said he, concluding, as I soon found, that he was talking to Mrs. Clitheroe, ‘ I must crave your pardon, if hearing your name, which is no very common one, has brought me into your premises on what may turn out one of my wild-goose chases. But if you can give me the bit of family information I am in quest of, perhaps it may be in my power to make it worth your while, or at least that of some of your kindred.’

“ ‘ Sir,’ said I, not exactly aware how confidential the communication might be, ‘ you are under a mistake as to the person you are addressing. It is not Mrs. Clitheroe, (who is out walking) but a visitor of her’s, who has the pleasure of receiving you.’

‘ Aye, aye ?’ cried the singular mortal, as original in manner as costume, ‘ then perhaps we had better keep family matters for family people. But if you’ll give me leave to wait till your friend comes in, it may be the means of saving me a tedious troublesome journey ; and though a traveller to the back-bone, if ever there was one, when it hits my fancy, I’d rather go in a kibitka from Siberia to Kamtschatka, (about the worst trip I ever made,

except perhaps my winter excursion across the Cordillera,) than take a jog-trot business journey of two or three hundred miles on the king's highway in England. Indeed, if in the ten years I've been away, all its inns are grown dens of sharks like the one I've got into at Dover, one may as well fall into the hands of Bedouins or banditti at once, and be fleeced like a gentleman. I've lived in Indian wigwams and Esquimaux huts, Ma'am, till I am no more fit to encounter the perils of civilization than a child.'

“ ‘ Siberia, the Cordilleras, wigwams, and Esquimaux ! ’ echoed I, anticipating a rich treat ; and strange indeed was the torrent of adventure, the flood-gates of which my exclamation, and its tone of undisguised interest, sufficed to set open.

“ Mr. Peregrine Palmer—for such was the designation of my new friend—had, he told me, been all his life a traveller ; and, satiated even before the late war with all the civilized countries of Europe, had gladly made exclusion from them an excuse for a trip to North America, nearly every part of which, from the Mississippi to the St. Lawrence, he believed he had explored. He spoke with rapture of the unsophisticated manners and habits of

the Indians ; so much so, that I began to wonder he had not staid among his beloved brethren in the ‘bush,’ as he characteristically called the forest.

“ However, his curiosity being gratified, and his stock of curiosities complete, he at length took leave of the settlements to return to England. But, lured by some report, irresistible to one of his erratic habits, he had instead embarked alone and unaided, (save by a band of migrating Indians,) in just such a painful expedition as that since so gloriously achieved by Captain Franklin, of traversing the northern deserts, and reaching some port whence he might proceed to Europe.

“ This port, there being then no such place on the map as Melville Island, nor indeed any idea, save in the brain of speculators, of communication from the north-east with this country, he of course sought towards the west ; and after remaining some months *malgré lui*, to heal his skinned feet, and take his chance of a possible vessel, among the good people of Nootka Sound, he had the rare chance of being taken off by a Russian discovery ship, about a year after leaving the United States.

“ But he was not much the nearer home, or Europe. For the Russian was just come out on a three years voyage ; and on this, *volens volens*, Mr. Peregrine must accompany her. He was however, nothing loth to do so, except on one account, which he told me pressed at times on his conscience ; viz. his being the depository of a paper, whose detention might have caused serious inconvenience in England. However there was no remedy, and to the South pole from the North one flew Mr. Peregrine, with the velocity (and about the same choice in the matter) of a shuttlecock.

“ At length, the expedition got back safely to Russia, and Mr. Peregrine felt, as he told me, ‘ just at home.’ Buonaparte was, however, about the same time, just at Moscow ; and the singularity and excitement of the crisis was quite to our traveller’s taste. When all was well over, he set out, not to return by sea from Cronstadt or Riga, (he had really, maugre his despatches, no heart for another sea voyage,) but along the devastated yet interesting track of the French armies, through the heart of Poland and Germany. A digression into Switzerland was inevitable—a comparison of Schaffhausen with Niagara irresistible—the en-

trance of the Allies into Paris ecstatic ! so it was only now, at the end of his fifth year from New York, that he found himself where he expected to land, in the ordinary course of the packet from that place !

“ ‘ It has all been very delightful to do and to look back upon,’ said the travel-stained wanderer. ‘ Except India and China, and the interior of Africa, I have little left to do. But before I take another trip, I must get rid of the paper which, like Sindbad’s old man of the sea, has hung around my neck these five years ; though I did send a duplicate home with a staid young fellow called Walsingham, who shewed me the lions at Petersburg, and swore to deliver it safely. You could not tell me, ma’am,’ said he, turning quickly to me, ‘ till your friend with the odd name comes in, whether one Dr. Aspinall of New York is dead or alive ? If he’s dead, there has been the devil to pay I doubt, among his heirs.’ ”

“ I fairly jumped off my seat with excess of astonishment at this out-Heroding of all the freaks of Dame fortune. I believe the man of travel thought me mad, and I’m sure I fancied myself dreaming. ‘ Sir,’ said I, when I *could* speak,

‘the person you mention is dead and buried, and the gentleman and lady out walking, Captain and Mrs. Clitheroe, among his nearest relations.’

“ ‘ You don’t say so !’ exclaimed the traveller, jumping up in his turn, and clapping his hands with delight. ‘ And have they touched the legacy ?’ ‘ No sir, nor any one else as yet, perhaps fortunately. The heir-at-law would have taken possession, but the doctor’s black servants hinted something of a will.’ ‘ ’Tis in my pocket !’ exclaimed my charming Robinson, ‘ no, not in my pocket, (for it was getting too thin to be there any longer,) but in my trunk. I’ll fetch it immediately. I’ve forgotten exactly what it contains, though I witnessed it duly enough ; but I’m sure the name of Clitheroe’s in it, and for a round sum. It struck me as an odd one at the time, and I saw it since when the lad Walsingham was copying the will to bring home. I met the old doctor botanizing in the woods up from Albany. He dried simples for me, I shot and stuffed snakes for him—‘ birds of a feather,’ you know, &c. In short we got great friends, and he took me home to his log-house, and intrusted me with his will to bring home ; as I said, God forgive me ! I was

going straight to England ; just as the puppy I met at Petersburg, and that promised to carry the copy without halting to Manchester, has made gun wadding of it by this time, I warrant.' (' Very near made something worse of it !' thought I.) ' But all's well that ends well ! the funds are safe, and so is the will.'

" Before I could stop him, he was off like a racoon to his lodgings ; and before I could exchange words, or almost glances, with the party who had in the mean time arrived from their walk—back with the eventful paper.

" I called up John Newborough, that there might be another uninterested person besides myself to witness the regularity of the proceeding ; and the will was opened by the only fingers in the room, those of steady old John I mean, competent to the office.

" It set forth that the testator, Gideon Aspinall, M.D., being of sound body and sound mind, and possessed (thanks to Providence and his own industry) of the sum of 200,000 dollars fairly earned—owing moreover no allegiance or favour to either England or America, or love and gratitude to any human being now living, three only excepted, viz.

his two black attendants, and one Françoise Clitheroe (née Labouchère) of Montreal in Upper Canada—did hereby bequeath to the two former faithful creatures, his house and furniture in the State of New York, with whatever sum in cash should be found in his possession, over and above his decent burial—and to the latter, (a child when he knew her, but now he understood married to a British officer) in requital of her father's kindness—in memory of his love for her mother—and in recollection of her own infant endearments—all the residue of his ample property ; to descend (should she not survive him,) to her daughter, named to the best of his belief, Pauline.

“ At this name I looked round for her who bore it; she had disappeared, glided out of the room gently and unperceived, to thank God for the ray of good fortune thus unexpectedly gilding her parent's evening sky. Of herself at that moment, I am persuaded she never thought ; nay Edmund, scarcely of you.

“ But it was not long ere she did so, and she owned it with her usual modest grace. ‘ You will write this wonderful affair to Mr. Meredith,’ said she coaxingly to me, when the good traveller had

left us, (not for long you may believe,) ‘and,’ added she, waiting in vain for me to help her out, ‘you will perhaps talk of going to see him at Hemsworth—and if you thought it would be any satisfaction, as matters now stand, that is, if there is no impropriety. . . .

“ ‘ You will be of the party, eh, Pauline? Is that the English of your disjointed murmurs?’

“ ‘ It is,’ said the sweet girl, gathering courage from my raillery. ‘ He asked me twice when I had nothing but myself to recommend me, why should I not, with forty thousand additional charms, return the compliment?’

“ ‘ Well said, and like your honest unaffected self, my dear girl. I shall not write at all to Hemsworth, but just go myself as the herald of good tidings; and as your reception would, you are aware, be *rather* doubtful, and as it will be more decorous for you to visit *me* there, than a young bachelor gentleman, why, I shall stay till you choose to come and rescue me from his fascinations, or till he comes to fetch you himself’ ” . . .

“ I’ll go to morrow morning,” exclaimed I, unceremoniously interrupting Mrs. Sydney, and jumping up as if I was going that minute.

“ I know you will,” said she quietly, “ I always intended it ; though it is hardly gallant in you thus either to leave me in the lurch, or turn me out of the house. But as I am old and lazy, as well as punctilious, I’ll prefer the less disgraceful alternative, and keep out your castle till you can bring a younger mistress to eject me. On one condition only however, else I’ll cut you both off *without* a shilling—that you do not defraud me of the wedding, and that it shall be *here*. Besides, it will be all *en règle*. Pauline, you know, asks *you* to marry her this time, and the wedding is always at the house of the party solicited.”

“ But,” said I, a sudden thought damping all the bright visions that flitted around me, “ *ought* I, as matters now stand, to take advantage of Miss Clitheroe’s generous impulse ? one perhaps dictated by the mere sense of gratitude ?”

“ Lord bless you, my dear Edmund, for being so delightfully silly, and so like the Alexanders and Amadis of *my* youthful reading. Without romance and nonsense the world would not be worth living in. But it is time your’s should end. Romances of real life should never extend beyond three volumes, with a proposal in each of them,

'and I think Pauline's leap year proceeding towards you, completes the number. Go and pack up your trunk, and send Alice to me with the tea equipage ; I want a composing cup mightily after carrying the *denouement* of a novel an hundred and fifty miles in my old head."

It would be an affront to the reader's imagination to be minute in my details of the meeting at Dover. That Mrs. Clitheroe took me round the neck, and the Captain once more offered me his arm chair, are matters of obvious certainty ; but if any one expects me to describe how Pauline received me, he must go unsatisfied to his grave. If I said she blushed, I might be wrong, for when I looked again she was pale ; she tried to smile, and very graciously, but what business a tear had on her cheek all the time, Oedipus alone could tell. All I can say distinctly is, that she looked extremely foolish, and I am sure I did the same ; and it was not till after the reading of a billet I brought from Mrs. Sydney, that my dear noble girl became herself again.

It satisfied her so completely of my unaltered sentiments, and deep-rooted sense of her generosity, not forgetting (trust Mrs. Sydney for that,) a word

or two in praise of her *preux chevalier*, as she called me, that the graceful dignified Pauline once more stood before me, with only sufficient traces of embarrassment to add interest to the picture.

“ You have asked Mr. Meredith to marry you, it is true, my dear child,” said the note (which I afterwards saw,) “ and that is a bold step for a young lady ; but as you did not oblige yourself to tell him *when*, your dignity will be saved by his travelling an hundred and fifty miles to ask *that* leading question. The only point in the affair, which, (like the Lord Chancellor,) I reserve to myself—is the place *where*, and that I have decided without appeal, is to be Hemsworth. The longer you keep your Strephon in suspense, the longer you will keep me in solitude, a thing, *entre nous*, I don’t love ; so I shall judge of your duty, affection, gratitude, and so forth, for one Mrs. Sydney Hume, in exact proportion as you arrive sooner or later, bag and baggage, at my hermitage.”

It was fortunate that I saw (by the discreet indiscretion of Mrs. Clitheroe) this magical billet. It enabled me to veil a lover’s impatience so gracefully under a landlord’s duty, that a week at farthest was named for the setting out of the party—thanks to the lucky suggestion of somebody, I believe of

Mr. Peregrine, who was to drop in upon us at the close of a tour in Wales—that the marriage might stand over *sine die* till we were all assembled.

I had brought with me, at her considerate suggestion, Mrs. Sydney's comfortable carriage; and when looking back from its old-fashioned box to consult the countenance of Pauline on some point of effect or scenery, I could not help drawing a delightful contrast with the vain efforts I had made to catch a glimpse of it through the ominous double veil on the morning of our first *rencontre* in the coach.

We arrived in sight of Hemsworth. The day was beautiful, and all looked well, at least in the eye of its master. It may be believed that I bent a glance of double solicitude on the countenance of Pauline. Its flush of gratified surprise could not be mistaken, nor the tear that dimmed her eye be wiped away in time to pass unobserved. I was repaid for everything! rejections, suspense, solitude, bankruptcy, all was swept away in that blissful moment. Mrs. Sydney stood on the threshold to receive us—"Here is the blessing I promised you, Edmund," said she, transferring Pauline from her own arms to mine; "I have done my best to win her for you, though I believe you saved me much

trouble in that way yourself, after all. Long may you wear what you have so fairly and so honourably earned."

If any body needs to be told that we were all, young and old and middle-aged of us, thoroughly happy for the month which preceded my marriage, he must be a fool. If he expects to be informed *how*, he must be disappointed, unless he can determine the relative shares of fine weather, agreeable company, sincere friendship and successful love in constituting that rare thing called happiness.

The day of days at length came. Mrs. Sydney walked a minuet at the wedding with the no longer gouty Captain, in the style of their mutual *jeunesse*, while Mrs. Clitheroe's Canadian recollections were agreeably revived by the performance of an Indian war-dance by the traveller, who was bride's man of course. The smooth turf of the bowling-green made a capital ball-room, and the full moon a special Argand lamp. My neighbours of all classes met on that neutral ground of nature with perfect equality and social good-fellowship; and when any fete is projected in the vale of Gloucester, it is still said, (and I have been fifteen years a married man) "ah! it will never be like the wedding at Hems-worth!"

THE
VOITURIER'S DAUGHTER.

THE
VOITURIER'S DAUGHTER.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

FROM THE PAPERS OF A RETIRED TRAVELLER.

IF it be possible, as I devoutly believe, to be at the same time a partial and devoted Briton, and a tolerant, nay, philanthropic citizen of the world ; to love and venerate with the devotion of a fire-worshipper the hearth of one's fathers, and yet to perambulate with delighted admiration the sunnier lands of others ; to bid adieu for a limited time to all that is deservedly dearest, merely, that on comparison with much that is rich and rare, it may become dearer still ; if these be compatible, nay even consistent feelings, I think I may lay claim to their possession.

Fate and inclination have made me a frequent traveller ; and though I never in my widest fit of philanthropy dreamed of balancing the keenest excitement of spirit experienced on touching a foreign strand, with the swelling heart and moistened eye that ever hailed the as yet almost invisible cliffs of Britain, I have often beguiled the painful familiarity of my voyages to the continent, by an attempt to compute the sum of relative joy and misery which the living freight around me might afford.

“Travel,” taken as implying a voluntary remove in quest of new enjoyment, is a delightful word ; but, alas ! it has, in our puzzling and anomalous language, a word of corresponding sound and slightly differing orthography, whose somewhat obsolete application is synonymous with grief, and which may even yet be too often associated with removal to a foreign country.

Is it not “*travail*” of body, aye, and of soul too, to the sober English landholder, to uproot at once his prejudices, deep-anchored in his native soil, and for the quiet life he prizes above all blessings, exchange the bustle, noise and discomfort of half the inns in Europe ? Is it not even *travail* to his tri-

umphant help-mate and exulting daughters, to swallow (at one meal perhaps) all the allotted "peck of dirt," which, by the Persian as well as English proverb, every individual here below is destined to consume—to extort, by help of dictionaries, English refinements from uncouth male chambermaids, and have at length the produce of half a year's income, and a whole year's study of Parisian fashions, ruthlessly re-exported at the fiat of a cross-grained *donanier*?

Why have I seen a man of sallow and atrabilious aspect pacing the deck of a Calais packet, when all in nature besides wore a smiling aspect, as if invoking the vengeance of heaven on himself and all mankind—but because, in bitter *travail* of soul, he deplored the frenzy which had sent him from some midnight hell, with the curse of Cain upon him, a perpetual and remorseful exile?

Is it not in bitterness, to which that of death itself were light, that yon beautiful but erring daughter of England, exchanges the land her fall has rendered hateful, for one which all its toleration of her frailties can never equally endear? That like Eve from Eden, she wanders forth with her partner in guilt, seeking only oblivion for the past, and

obscurity for the future? Looking fondly back like the fugitive wife of Lot, on the confines of that native land to which, like her, she is doomed to be a perpetual and melancholy beacon?

And,—for alas! in this world of “*travail*,” sorrow is not always necessarily the companion of guilt—is it not with a bleeding and lacerated, though devoted heart, that many a doating parent, and many a tender sister, and many an adoring wife, accompanies, uncheered even by hope, all her earthly treasure, enshrined in one fast-dissolving tabernacle, on that cruel pilgrimage in quest of a stranger’s grave, which robs death of its sweetest alleviations, and the survivor of his most hallowed privilege?

How often have I seen, with a sigh of heartfelt sympathy, the eye of such a devoted companion turn “dim with natural tears” from the shores *it* might hereafter hope to revisit, to encounter the sad yet resigned glance of *him* from whom they were receding for ever? How often have I sadly pictured to myself the solitary return of that widowed mourner, when every foot of land traversed, and every buoyant wave surmounted, would add to the distance from the spot where she had left *all* save country and home,—a country now blighted by

bercavement,—a home, painful in its very exuberance of desolate beauty.

It has been my lot to visit more than once the southern shores of France, and never I think without encountering the interesting but painful spectacle of these pilgrims, not of hope but duty ; seeking to prolong beneath her genial suns a frail existence, which might have been earlier perhaps, but far more gently and tranquilly extinguished, behind the softly closing clouds of its own less radiant clime.

It was in April 18—, that, in a desperate fit of spleen at the east winds of my native country, I embarked—with no very precise drift or object—in a vessel quitting Southampton for Bordeaux. I found its indifferent cabin already occupied by a couple such as I have attempted to describe, an interesting, patient, mild-looking young man, evidently far gone in consumption, and one of those ministering spirits in human form, who seem thus enshrined for the gracious purpose of giving to suffering its greatest possible alleviations, and cheering, with smiles not of this world, the pillow *they* only know how to smooth.

Here was no field for the display of English re-

serve, had I even been disposed to wrap myself in its unsocial mantle. In the course of the tedious, variable voyage, Irwin became to me as a brother, and if it was otherwise with Caroline, it was that on my part veneration repressed familiarity."

The plan of this attached couple had been to seek at once the Isles of Hières, whose refreshing breezes would, they had been told, counterbalance the heats of so southern a latitude. But I had wooed in vain these boasted breezes during a summer of parching drought and intensity, so I dissuaded them from purchasing at the sacrifice of society and other advantages, a precarious good ; and, led by my own filial partiality for that land of the sublime and beautiful, induced them to accompany me to Switzerland.

Italy was I knew their destination in winter—but something whispered that Irwin would need no earthly refuge from its storms^{*} ; and the intervening months of slow and painful decline could, I knew, be nowhere passed with so little absence of English comfort and tranquillity, as near Lausanne. There is in Switzerland a perpetual feast for the closing eye, which loves to wander upward to its God ; nor is that eye offended, or its pass-

ing serenity disturbed, as in more southern lands, by scenes of abject misery or ferocious guilt. No ! if on earth peace and simplicity are to be found—it is in Switzerland. The character of her sons is grave and tranquil as the majestic mountains on whose stable flanks they have their wondrous dwelling. The hum of the great world reaches them softened by distance, and though not exempt from human passions and petty cares, these soon flit aside, eclipsed as it were by the superior magnitude of the surrounding objects of nature. The man who, in a valley of the Alps, with heaven alone visible beyond earth's giant bulwarks, a foaming torrent at his feet, and a few simple shepherd huts perched in mid air between the flood and sky, could find room for mean or sordid thoughts, were prey, methinks, too ignoble for the mountain eagle hovering over his head.

It was soon evident that poor Irwin was not destined to behold that fair southern land for which his sick heart pined, or to realize those bright dreams of Italy which had lured him from his home to die among strangers. The fatigue of the journey from Bordeaux proved a draught upon his slender stock of strength, to which it was

quite inadequate ; and to slumber out his waning existence on the lovely banks of the Lemán, became alike welcome and expedient. I knew every inch of the “ sweet vicinage ” with native familiarity, and soon settled him and his amiable wife, to their entire satisfaction, at the Campagne V——, slightly elevated above the lake, and commanding a prospect on which closing eyes might rest in blissful anticipation of a yet lovelier paradise.

The formation of their little household became next matter of friendly solicitude, and in this also they relied on my knowledge of the Swiss character in general, as well as of individuals at Lausanne. Irwin was already fortunate in the unbounded attachment and invaluable services of an elderly English servant ; but the gay Parisian damsel whom a hope of visiting Naples had induced to engage in London with his wife, had long since shrunk from the ennui of a sick-bed in a Swiss Campagne, and was sent back to a more congenial element. I undertook to procure a substitute, whose simple integrity and unsophisticated nature should amply compensate for lack of skill and experience. “ I want some one to

feel for me, and assist in nursing poor Charles," said Mrs. Irwin; "dress and all its accompaniments are worse than vanity to me at present. Honesty and good temper are all I require."

"I know where they ought to be found," said I, "at least, if such qualities are hereditary;" and I betook myself to the abode of an humble Vaudois friend, whose indifference to gain, (a rare quality among his countrymen,) and invincible good humour, had really endeared him to me in the course of many a summer ramble among the mountains.

It is difficult for an untravelled Englishman, accustomed only during his rapid migration through our native land, to the brief intercourse and mercenary spirit of her postilions, to imagine the degree of mutual good-will and familiar companionship, which often springs up, during a prolonged pilgrimage of weeks or months, between the continental wanderer and his vetturino.

In the first place, there is in the breast of the latter, whether belonging to France, Switzerland, or Italy, a far less humiliating sense of the inequality of rank between himself and his temporary master; nor ought this feeling, when unalloyed (as it sel-

dom is) with any mixture of presumption or insolence, to have in it any thing displeasing to a free-born Briton. Then the said traveller is not only, for the time of their contract, strictly under the protection and safe-guard of the *conducteur*, who feels that, for his safety, he is responsible to God and man, but the object of his hourly and often affectionate solicitude ; a feeling strengthened in many cases by the absolute dependence of the dumb novice, for all that concerns his comfort and interest, on him, to whom he has been delivered, (if not exactly bound hand and foot,) yet with a tongue more effectually fettered still.

This, to be sure, is not precisely the case most favourable to a mutual attachment between master and man. It is when the former has sufficient knowledge of a common idiom, to relish, in all its vigorous originality, the racy way-faring talk of his faithful driver, nay even to return him tale for tale, and jest for jest ; when disinterestedness on the one side, and liberality on the other, have done honour, in the eyes of both, to their common nature ; when perils surmounted and hardships shared together, have dignified the bond, and robbed it of its servile character ; above all, when it has been nobly

cemented, and for life, by the blood which has been shed, or at least periled in mutual defence—then, and then only it is, that the *voiturier* may legitimately forget the master or the friend, and the solitary traveller feel towards the comrade of his wanderings, as I blush not to say I felt towards honest Pierre Le Blanc.

This worthy old man had, in the course of a last year's autumnal ramble, expressed in behalf of his daughter Fanchette the wish so usual among the more aspiring *Suissesses*, that she could find a service with one of the *belles dames Anglaises*, whose wealth and goodness are alike popular at Lausanne. England is the “*El Dorado*” to which Swiss adventurers, male and female, look with aspirations I fear too often delusive—nor do even pecuniary advantages when realized, always cure the Alpine malady of the heart, from which not Eden itself could here below exempt a Swiss bosom. Fanchette, however, had, last year, at eighteen, testified all the readiness of a novice to embark on an untried, and of course, delightful world; and whether it were to cross the Alps behind her father's well-known mules, in quest of brighter suns in Italy, or

to traverse the formidable sea, in a scarcely to be imagined ship, in pursuit of wealth in foggy England, was nearly alike to one who bore perennial sunshine in her own light heart and open countenance. But one year, nay eight short months had, I found, done much to sober the "truant inclination" of the little maiden. As well might I have hoped to uproot Mont Blanc and transport it to gladden the gaze of cocknies in Cheapside, as by the lure either of wealth or novelty, to unmoor the faithful heart of Fanchette from love's steadfast anchorage.

"*Que voulez vous, Monsieur ?*" was le Blanc's reply, after the overflowings of his sincere gratitude had subsided, "*la petite a perdu l'envie de courir le monde. Diantre ! si elle en savait autant que moi, qui ai plus fait de lieus qu'elle n'a de cheveux à la tete.*" I found, from the tenor of this response, that my good friend (whose only knowledge of the English was as an exemplification of the perpetual motion, and whose own everlasting vocation of rolling them up the Alps reminded me of that of Sisyphus) supposed my object was still to engage his daughter to quit her country, and I quickly un-

deceived him by saying, it was in a family stationary for the summer at Lausanne that her services were required.

“ *Ah ! c'est autre chose ça !* ” was his ready answer ; “ *vous voyez, Monsieur,* ” continued he, in a confidential tone, “ *Jacques le Vasseur*, a lad of my own *pays d'Aubonne* ” (designating by the pompous epithet, a village within a few miles of Lausanne famous for rural opulence,) “ came to me last winter, when the snow being on the ground, and the mules in the stable, I went to wish my rich country cousins a good new year, and said, ‘ *Pierre le Blanc*, I love your daughter *Fanchette*. I saw her when I went to assist poor old aunt *Barbara* in her vintage at *Lutri*. *She* too would lend a helping hand in the widow's *vigne*, although not a drop's blood to her ; and when many girls, not half so pretty, romped and flirted, and listened to the *sots propos* and *contes bleus* of idle lads, *Fanchette* filled her basket, and minded her work, and when any one spoke to her, answered civilly and kept her eyes on the ground. I spoke to her at length, but it was not any *fa daises*, such as I saw she did not like ; I asked her first if she could

fancy the country, and the life of a *vigneron*, and then—if she could fancy the *vigneron* himself? She looked down more than ever, and kept cutting the branches next the ground ; but I saw a blush and then a smile, and something I could hear about *mon père*.

“ ‘ Now, this put me in mind that *I* had a father to consult too ; but when I spoke to him, he said, ‘ *Bah ! tu es trop jeune, et puis une fille élevée en ville, que sait-elle en fait de ménage ?* ’ so I was forced to hold my tongue, and get my mother quietly to see if he was in earnest in disliking the match. She did all she could for me ; told him Fanchette was come of good people, *gens d'Aubonne*, like ourselves ; and then, knowing his weak side, added, that she was an only child, and you must be rich, having travelled so much with *Milords Anglais*.

“ ‘ Hum,’ said my father, ‘ that is just what I doubt ; a rolling stone gathers no moss. *Voituriers* are like their cattle, they work hard and live hard ; you may as well expect to see a mule die fat, as a *roulier* die rich ; ’ and so on he went, till my mother saw money was at the bottom, and got fairly out of him, that if you could give Fanchette five

hundred *gros écus* down, to set us a-going, and as much at your death, the match would be quite to his mind.'

"Now, *Monsieur*," continued Pierre le Blanc in his own person, "the last part of this proposal would have puzzled me very little ; for if all men were as honest as Pierre le Blanc, and would pay what they owe him, I may hope to leave Fanchette, what with house, *voitures* and mules, three times the *dot* the old miser wants. But five hundred down, I told the boy I could not muster, at least until the summer's harvest of my friends the *Milords*, should be over, and turn out a good one. As yet I have had no luck. When I could have carried a fat English *millionaire* all the way to Naples, and made my own bargain, a *grosse fièvre* laid me up, and *adieu les belles guinées ! Diantre*, if it had only happened the week before, when I was fool enough to drive on a skinflint of a German prince with a huge *berline* that knocked up every mule I had, for a pittance that I was actually ashamed to take from his serene highness's hands. In short, I am still *minus* a good hundred crowns, and old Baptiste sticks to his tether, and '*point d'argent, point de nocce*,' is his motto. Till winter, as I tell Fan-

chette, when I see her eyes red, she need not think of Jacques le Vasseur."

"Well, then," interrupted I, "suppose she passes the interval in serving my *aimable dame Anglaise* here at Onehi, earning, I daresay, (if she resembles her father in worth and honesty,) the best part of the *cent écus*, or at least a handsome *trousseau* for her wedding. My friends are rich, and when the poor gentleman's eyes are closed in peace, his widow will think no recompense too much for those who have helped to smooth his pillow."

The father was delighted, Fanchette summoned, and the bargain concluded; nor, when I saw the velvet cheek and bright eye that peeped from beneath the becoming black gauze cap of the country, did I wonder at Jacques le Vasseur's taste in a wife. Oh! that some of the pert bedizened actresses, who in London and Paris imitate Nature so abominably, could for one evening borrow the rustic dignity and village grace of Fanchette le Blanc. Their individual fortunes would be made, and we should not again see milliner airs and Abigail impudence habited in the outraged costume of the Alps.

Mrs. Irwin was from the first quite delighted

with Fanchette, and the poor invalid soon learned to think her gentle and unobtrusive services only second to those of the grave, taciturn, but devoted Willis. This personage, albeit unused to the approving mood, was ere long compelled to admit, that the girl was well enough for a *Frenchwoman*, no geographical or statistical distinctions being sufficient to counterbalance in his mind the conviction of obstinate *Gallicism*, arising from what he called her *d—d lingo* ! However, like every thing else foreign, the very virtues and merits of Fanchette, had, in Willis's eyes, a spurious, tinsel air ; and he would not have been sorry to find his constitutional antipathy justified even by her proving a counterfeit.

Summer passed at *Campagne V——*, amid these harassing alternations of suffering and relief, which mark the most deceitful of diseases. Sometimes the invalid felt invigorated by the balmy airs of Onchi, (the Montpellier of the Canton de Vand,) unrolled the map of Italy, traced his intended route, and, with an eye that sparkled but too intensely, talked of the Pantheon and the Coliseum. Then would one blast of the ungenial *bisc*, or fever's still more fell simoom, wither in a moment all these

buds of hope, and whisper that his farthest journey would be to the sweet cemetery of Lausanne.

The inexplicable interest which arises from being serviceable to countrymen in distress, combined with the amiable qualities of the invalid and his devoted wife to fix me in the neighbourhood of Lausanne for the summer ; though I availed myself of the intervals above alluded to, for making, under the auspices of my friend Le Blanc, various short excursions into the picturesque Oberland, and the less known, but little less romantic district of the Simmenthal, and the darkly beautiful valley through which rushes the foaming Kander. It was here, that for the first time, remote from all the peopled haunts of his countrymen, in perhaps the only uninhabited valley in Switzerland, (the *Oeschithal*) the spirit of the lively Vandois died within him ; and he exclaimed, in the mongrel dialect, which savoured of the various lands he frequented, “ *Ma foi, Monsieur, c'est beaucoup triste !*”

On my return from this latest and most interesting of my Alpine rambles, I found poor Irwin sinking under the united influence of the advancing season, and the exhausted energies of a con-

stitution so long and severely tried. The period of acute pain and actual malady was past, and his departure was calm and placid as faith and hope could make it. He talked to me long and confidentially of his surviving relations, and of the causeless animosity with which they had harassed his fair and unoffending bride; whom he commended with dying earnestness to my fraternal care and protection. It was superfluous to promise as a boon, what mere instinct and humanity must have dictated. Irwin read in my eyes that Caroline would never while I lived want a friend; if he read there aught beside, it was more than I then felt, or ever suspected; but be their expression what it might, it soothed and satisfied his expiring gaze, which rested alternately on me and one still dearer.

It is needless to say that on me devolved the sad task of consigning to a foreign grave the mortal remains of my countryman; but the labour of love was shared by many sympathising sons of the soil which covered them—and richly rewarded by the speechless gratitude of a widowed heart. Mrs. Irwin would have clung with all its devotion, to the spot which contained her beloved; but her own

health had been affected by grief and confinement, her lungs were not naturally strong, and, backed by good Dr. S——, (the skilful attendant on her late husband,) I succeeded in prevailing on her—unequal as she felt to crossing the Alps under such painfully altered circumstances—to pass the winter months in the temperate climate of Lyons. My remaining to escort her thither, we both tacitly felt to be inexpedient—it was therefore with peculiar satisfaction that, in addition to the trusty championship of the heart-broken Willis, I secured for her the prolonged services of her favourite Fanchette. The hundred crowns had long since been her's, by the express bequest of poor Irwin ; and Jacques le Vasseur, notwithstanding the gloom thrown over the village by a deficient vintage, was quite ready to take home his young housekeeper. But Fanchette felt that Jacques could live through the winter on the hope which animated her own innocent bosom ; while her poor mistress stood in need of all the consolation her kind attentions could impart. She won my heart and Mrs. Irwin's by volunteering to go to Lyons—and if she lost any ground by it in Jacques le Vasseur's, I can only say he was not worthy to possess her. But it

could not be so ; for it was he who I saw placed Fanchette on the box of the carriage beside the austere and vinegar-aspected Willis, smiling through a tear, and kissing his hand as long as she slowly wound along the matchless terracc of Mont Benon, and finally disappeared down the poplar-lined descent of Cour.

I too followed the carriage with longing eyes, till that decisive moment—then turning rapidly, and, scarce casting one lingering look on mountain, lake, and vineyard, glowing in autumn's gorgeous hues—jumped into the light vehicle of the Milan courier, and whirled away with stunning rapidity across the Alps. The lateness of the season, and a restlessness not natural to my character, alike determined me, though with reluctance, to adopt this mode of travelling, in preference to the calm jog-trot and well-known steadiness of my friend Le Blanc ; whose mortification I however alleviated by promising that, if all went well, he should come and fetch me out of Italy in spring—when season and inclination would both, I anticipated, render leisurely travelling delightful. “ *Adieu, Monsieur,*” sighed the honest Vaudois, “ *j’irai volontiers vous chercher au bout du monde. Vous avez fait le bon-*

heur de Fanchette—faut que vous soyez de la noce. Adieu jusqu'au printems."

My winter in Italy passed, as it must ever do, in that land which realizes all the romance of a previous existence, whose dust is the ashes of dead heroes, whose stones are sermons, and her language poetry. Were all the monuments of ancient and modern art in Italy annihilated—the classical contour of her ferocious but never boorish peasantry, would stamp antiquity upon her very surface. Were the wand of an enchanter to re-people the Forum with the contemporaries of Cæsar and Cicero, they might gaze bewildered on the stately spectre of the Coliseum, on fallen fanes, and travestied Basilicæ ; but amid filth, and squalor, and poverty, they would assuredly stretch out the hand of brotherhood to the cloaked and daggered groups of the Piazza Navona, and recognise in some rude Trasteverine matron, the features, if not the costume of Cornelia. The very hovels of Italy look as if built to be painted, not inhabited ; her palaces, as if the work of an extinct race of giants, " a world too wide for the shrunk souls " that tenant them. There is something even in the Macaroni and chesnuts which sustain her vast and ve-

getating population, more picturesque and fanciful than the grosser viands of the unideal North. Her Lazzaroni look like reckless children of the sun, to whom his beams are food and raiment, and the sky they live beneath ! where is its parallel, save in the sea, whose mirror gives it back in liquid glory ?

I am no tour writer.—Heaven bless the mark ! there are enow of them—from much calumniated Eustace, one spark of whose genuine orthodox enthusiasm would amply compensate for the grains of chaff which envious dolts have sifted from amidst his classic pearls—to him, the nameless scribbler of yesterday, who repeats with parrot accuracy, and owl-like gravity, what honest Misson and sagacious Evelyn told us, in better English, centuries ago. If ever I found a premium at either of the bedding universities, it will be for an original sentence upon Italy—and yet why should I ? for if all have written alike, because the bases of human feeling, when genuine, are unchangeable—it were a paltry ambition, like his who planned the leaning Tower of Pisa—to seek novelty in distortion. That “multitude,” whom to follow in practice is often dangerous—is in sentiment a generally in-

fallible guide. Be it mine to echo, from the inmost recesses of a reverential bosom, its time-hallowed oracles on Italy.

Spring found me a returning pilgrim from the desolate fanes of Pæstum, and the subterranean shrines of Pompeii, but still a lingerer amid the groves of Tusculum and Tivoli. Yet even here, there mingled unconsciously dreams of a less lofty and more selfish character. My footsteps might be tracing the course of the Anio or the Tiber—yet would my heart wander to the confluence of the Rhone and Saone. Lyons was the goal to which my aspirations silently and secretly pointed; and, day by day, I was only deterred from the simple and obvious duty of writing to Mrs. Irwin, by thinking of it till it had become formidable; when my difficulties were removed, though I confess very disagreeably, by the following letter, the painful contents of which for a time absorbed all more selfish emotions.

“ LYONS.

“ You will learn, with the same pain which it costs me to make the communication, that your *protégée* Fanchette Le Blanc has turned out sadly different from what we both imagined her. My

slowly returning peace of mind has been cruelly invaded by an act of base ingratitude and sordid treachery on her part, of which, to judge from appearances, we should have deemed her wholly incapable; but which irrefragable proofs have fixed upon her, beyond all possibility of doubt.

“ I know not if you remember that only and fatal day, when your considerate kindness won upon me to leave Irwin for an hour or two, to enjoy for the first and last time, a sail upon the lovely lake under our windows. I had been engaged during the morning in looking over and arranging some valuable jewels—strange occupation, you will say, when he whose tenderness bestowed them was expiring by my side. Yet from that very sad circumstance arose the necessity for the trying task—for when the hand of the bestower should be cold, I felt determined that they should earn for me no longer the dislike and jealousy of his relations, who, never alas ! disposed to regard me with affection, would have made the detention or alienation of their boasted heir-looms matter of angry or disdainful comment.

“ A summons from you to join the party in the boat surprised me in the midst of my unfinished

task ; and, hastily snatching up the cases, I huddled them, unexamined, into my cabinet, to which, alas ! Fanchette alone, besides myself, had access.

“ On my return from our ill-fated excursion, I found poor Charles very ill ; and the violent attack that ensued, the one his feeble frame sunk under, left me from that sad moment no leisure to think of glittering baubles. Exhausted as I was in mind and body, on quitting Lausanne, the whole task of removal devolved upon the active Fanchette, by whose, as I then thought faithful hands, I faintly recollect having seen the jewel cases transferred from the cabinet to my travelling trunk. I thought no more about them or their contents, till about a month ago my banker at Lyons asked me if I had any commands for England, as a trusty clerk of his was about to proceed thither on a commercial mission.

“ I eagerly embraced the opportunity of transmitting the hated jewels to Charles's cold-hearted sisters. A previous examination and inventory became necessary. I unclasped, for the last time, the long unopened cases, and found, with unutterable dismay, that they were empty ! My exclamations of wonder brought Fanchette, who joined in

the chorus with an air of simple astonishment and unconscious naiveté, most incomprehensible in one so young, and surely as yet a novice in crime.

“ Believe me, it was hours, nay days, ere a suspicion of your gentle interesting *Vaudoise* crossed my brain ; nor would it perhaps even then, had not old Willis, who, from the first, distrusted her as a foreigner, at once pointed her out as the only possible agent in the robbery. Who else had access at all times to the cabinet where the jewels lay ? or who, granting it possible I had (as I sometimes half fancied might be the case) left them on the table when summoned to the water party, could have removed them thence ? Indeed this last conjecture acquired with Willis the force of demonstration, for, being at the time of poor Charles’s sudden seizure, himself infirm with gout, he well remembered Fanchette’s lighter step having carried her long before him to answer her master’s bell, and his finding her in excessive (yet surely easily accounted for) agitation in the room, beside the very table on which, from Willis’s knowledge of my somewhat careless habits, he thinks I left the jewels, where I, in a fit of absence, locked up the empty cases.

“ But why speculate thus idly and unprofitably on the how, or when ? Alas ! it matters little, for the *fact* is undeniable. I long refused to listen to a prejudiced accuser, nay, even to hint my suspicions to a creature so unlike a base purloiner. Yet there were corroborating circumstances, the force of which I could not altogether resist. I recollected, just before the time the jewels disappeared, hearing that Pierre le Blanc, by the villany of a horse-dealer, had sustained a grievous loss, exceeding probably the amount of the promised sum to be paid down with his daughter ; but which, though I had then sadder thoughts to occupy me, I privately determined to make up. I remembered hearing, as in a dream, that the loss had staggered old le Vasseur as to the projected match, and Fanchette I recollected had been low and dejected upon it ; but, alas ! I was then myself more in a condition to receive than bestow sympathy, and my future good intentions reconciled me to the temporary cloud on Fanchette’s brow. This, however, without communication from me, suddenly cleared away, and she became, on our arrival at Lyons, light-hearted as before.

“ All this, put together and commented on by

my gruff but faithful majordomo, compelled me to investigate ; and, goaded on by a taunting letter of condolence from one to whom it was gall to know me rightful mistress of all poor Charles had left behind him—I spoke at first gently and hesitatingly to Fanchette, and asked her calmly when and where she last saw the jewels ? She answered me, not certainly with the confidence of perfect innocence, that she had never seen them at all ; then, on my pressing her, admitted, with tears and blushes, having peeped in mere idle curiosity into the cases one day, while arranging my wardrobe, soon after entering on my service at Lausanne. She said, with a simplicity which, coupled with her guilt, seems inexplicable, that having read in a fairy tale of a princess, out of whose mouth issued pearls and diamonds, she just wished to see what sort of things they were ; but now she bitterly repented having done so, as she could no longer say with truth she had not even *seen* them.

“ Wishing to sound as gently as I could the extent of her information, I asked her how much she supposed what I had lost might be worth ? She staggered all my ideas of her criminality by answering, ‘ *Dame, que sais-je ? peut-être cent*

francs de Suisse. ‘Nay, Fanchette,’ thought I, ‘for this paltry sum you would surely never burden your soul with guilt;’ but Willis swore it was all cunning, and that she knew as well as I did they were more nearly worth a thousand crowns, the very sum required for her marriage-portion by the avaricious le Vasseur, most of which we now ascertained had been lost by her own father’s credulous confidence in the honesty of a crafty speculator.

“The temptation, it must be confessed, was great; the baubles which, in my sable garb, she rightly thought I should never again require, would set her up in her new *ménage*; and then perhaps, when all was fairly over, I might forget and forgive. ‘It was just so,—was it not Fanchette?’ said I, (at length venturing indirectly to accuse her.) Never shall I forget her look on the occasion. Words she had none—not even a tear—but a gaze of simple straight-forward wonderment mingled with horror, which—proved as it has since been to be acting—leaves all the theatres of London and Paris hopelessly behind. Confess she would not, coax or threaten as we might; to deny, she apparently disdained. She grew red and pale alternate-

ly, as one might do, either under the influence of remorse or indignation, refused food, and never closed an eye ; but it was not till, alarmed and softened out of all my just suspicions, by her speechless agony—I fairly disavowed them all—that she threw herself unbidden on my neck, and relieved her labouring bosom by a flood of tears. They flowed so softly, so placidly, with such seeming purity, that they actually deceived me, and in spite of Willis's prognostics, I once more pronounced her innocent. Guilty or not, I should, had I alone been concerned, have gladly let the matter drop—but recollecting how apocryphal would seem to those I meant to have shamed into better thoughts of me, the disappearance of their intended spoil, I consented to let the police take the matter up, and institute a general search among my servants.

“ This at Lyons proved unavailing, and acquiescing in Willis's opinion, that the theft had been committed at Lausanne, I allowed him to write thither, and subject to the same ordeal the residences of the Swiss part of my household. This included the house of Fanchette's father, Pierre Le Blanc, and alas ! Mr. Selwyn, for poor human

nature ! under that honest man's roof, (unknown doubtless to him,) were found the sad proofs of his daughter's depravity ! My jewels—just as I had left them on the table—the pearls half unstrung—the diamonds wrapped loosely together (caught up no doubt with all the trembling haste of guilt,) were found, carefully secreted in Fanchette's bed-room. I need say no more. To write this to you, renews the pain I felt on first hearing it.

“ I thought of your kindness to him who is gone ; and of her's too—for she was a ^{so}gentle and kind, though erring creature—and forbore to punish her otherwise than by instant dismissal. She said very little, and wept none ; but looked, while moving through the house collecting her small property, more like a ghost than a living being. The servants (Willis excepted) doubted even in the face of proof, and shook hands kindly with the fascinating culprit ; and when she came with her usual gentle tap to my rigidly bolted door, and said in her mild and tremulous voice, ‘ *Dieu vous benisse, madame !* ’ I am not ashamed to tell you, that I wept like a child. She heard me I believe, for then she wept too ; and when I watched her leaving the house with her little bundle, to go I knew not

whither, my heart smote me for allowing even this lost sheep to wander unhooded in the wilderness. I doubt much if she would go to Lausanne; Pierre Le Blanc's can be no home for guilt to nestle in. Poor broken-hearted old man! I long to comfort him, but know not how—for money will never heal his wounded spirit. Mine is sinking under this sad, this dreary detail; I must conclude.

“ May I so far depend on your kindness, as to look to you for offices of compassion to the father, whose peace of mind we have between us innocently ruined, and the child, whose once bright prospects our fatal patronage has so cruelly marred. Adieu.

C. I.”

I leave to those more skilful than myself in the dissection of motives, to settle the respective shares of vexation, humanity, and something not at all akin to either, in my immediate determination to return to Lausanne. “ What !” I hear critics and *cognoscenti* exclaim, “ abandon Italy, arts and antiquities, to clear up a case of petty larceny, and vindicate the honour of an old *Vetturino* and a young chambermaid ?” Even so, gentlemen; and if you will kindly give me credit for these sole motives, I

will as gladly submit to their unmingled ignominy. If I know myself, however, they *would* have sufficed to send me back to Switzerland a few weeks, or even months earlier than I intended ; for I had ever a dash of knight-errantry in my disposition, and there hung over the present occurrence a mystery to lend zest to chivalry. Be this as it may, I bid to Rome, I fondly hoped, no very lasting adieu—and once more seated beside the rapidly whirling courier—found myself early on the second day at Florence.

I strolled almost immediately on arriving to the well-known resort of couriers and vetturini in the Strada B——, anxious to ascertain in person what drivers or vehicles were about to start for Switzerland ; concluding that my breach of promise to old Pierre would be more than compensated, by my services in sifting and elucidating the mysterious affair of the stolen jewels. I was eagerly inquiring for a light carriage and horses for Lausanne, when from amid the crowd assembled in the stable yard, there issued a voice, which, changed and broken as it was, I thought I recognised, saying, “ *C'est moi qui suis pour Lausanne, avec Calèche et deux chevaux ; tout ce qui me reste au monde, mais n'importe !* ”

added in a still more subdued key, my old and once gay comrade, honest le Blanc.

“*Est-ce bien toi Pierre ?*” I exclaimed, starting forward, and half embracing, to the astonishment of the gaping stable-boys, my quondam *conducteur*. But, alas ! no ghost returned from Stygian shore ever more sadly mocked the grasp of friendship. Pierre, hale, robust and florid, when I left him five months before, was now, under the mining influence of misfortune and disgrace, but the shadow of his former self. His hair, then slightly grizzled, was now thin and grey ; his cheek had the languor of recent disease ; and his ample *capote* hung loose about him, like a borrowed garment. He looked at me, strove to answer, choked, and was silent.

I drew him aside out of the crowd, and then, when he could quietly wipe the tear that trickled down his weather-beaten cheek, he found utterance. “ Little did I think, *Monsieur*, to weep when I should come to fetch you out of Italy, this blessed spring ; and little did you dream, no doubt, that when you kindly helped *her*, (he had vainly struggled for her name,) to an honourable livelihood, it was to make an outcast of her for the rest of her long young life. *I* shall soon die, and hear no

more of it, but *she*, if indeed she yet lives, what will become of *her*? Perhaps you do not know . . .” added he, half bewildered by distress.

“Oh, yes, I am too well aware, Pierre,” answered I, “of what so grievously afflicts us both. But is it possible *you* do not know where your misguided daughter is? or how this sad mysterious business was brought about or discovered? *I* for one, cannot believe Fanchette did the deed. Some enemy of her’s and your’s has sought to sully her good name, or make her his unconscious instrument. Would I could bring to light, and brand the villain! But Providence will sooner or later clear the innocent.”

“Yes, God is just,” exclaimed the wretched father, “and merciful. If my child has erred, He only can forgive; if she is guiltless, He alone can vindicate her. His blessing go with her, wherever she may be hiding her unhappy head.”

“Have you no tidings of her, Pierre?” said I; “Where were you when this sad affair took place?”

“*En voyage, à mon ordinaire*,” said he, with a deep sigh, “far off, *du côté de Constance*, taking a German Baroness home to her castle in Suabia. Judge what a state old Marthe, (who nursed Fan-

chette, and kept my house ever since God took Lise,) was in, when, late one night, four *sbirri*-looking fellows came to the door, with warrants from the syndic, and insisted upon searching the house. It was a sad disgrace to see such cattle even on Pierre le Blanc's threshold ; but when they said it was on Fanchette's account, and that my child had robbed her mistress of her jewels, Marthe thought either she or they must be gone mad, and refused them the key of poor Fanchette's room. Find it indeed she could not, in her fright, for her *old maux de nerfs* attacked her, and she was carried senseless out of the house. So they broke open the door, it seems, and found—four men, (*one* of them at least an *homme de bien*, and a *père de famille*,) swear they found there all the stolen jewels! God only knows who put them there,—not *mon enfant*, if ever old father had a right to know his daughter's heart. But who can answer even for his own? *Dieu sait!* my loss, her marriage which it threatened to break off—temptation, opportunity. Oh God! that I but knew she was alive, with leisure for repentance given her.”

“I have no fears for her life,” I replied, “but much uneasiness about her notwithstanding. She

seems to have left Lyons days or weeks ago ; did she not seek her first refuge with her father ?”

“ I have not been home yet,” answered he despondingly ; “ I am just out of my old fever, which laid me up on hearing the news, this fortnight at Bologna—but a young *camarade* here, straight from the *Faucon* at Lausanne, tells me he thinks he saw poor Fanchette gliding along before the inn windows in the dusk, more like a ghost than a living being. He watched her round the corner, and called softly, ‘ *Mademoiselle Fanchette* ;’ but she never turned, nor answered, and disappeared beneath the archway ; so whether it was indeed her ghost or not, Victor remains uncertain. Marthe, he says, still keeps her bed, in the neighbour’s house she was carried to—and my door, God help me ! is sealed up, like a *mauvais sujet*’s, with the broad seal of the Canton, till I return, or till your *grande dame Anglaise*,” (this was said with the first tinge of pardonable bitterness,) “ in her thirst for my poor child’s blood, has it opened before witnesses as an evidence of her guilt on the trial.”

“ Fanchette will never be tried by human tribunal, Pierre,” said I. “ Mrs. Irwin pities and forgives her, nay, wept over her departure as a shep-

herd pities his stray lamb, and only reproaches herself that she did not do more to shield her from farther sin or suffering. But *courage ! mon ami*," added I in a more cheerful voice, " if Fanchette is above ground, it will go hard if two *vieux routiers* like yourself and me cannot ferret her out. We start to-morrow, by daylight, *n'est-ce pas ? cela va sans dire.*"

" *Ce soir, Monsieur, si vous voulez,*" exclaimed the grateful father ; but the old man had need of sustenance and rest. I bade his townsman Victor ply him with a sober flask of wine that renovates the Switzer's heart ; and devolving on that worthy lad the active preparations for our departure, found leisure to look at the Venus de Medicis.

By sunrise next morning, we were slowly surmounting the giant bulwark of the Apennines ; and I was taking from the aerial terrace called *le Maschere* my last fond gaze at lovely, fast receding Florence. " Shall I ever see thee again ? and with whom ?" were questions I *would* ask myself and could not answer ; so I strove to divert these unprofitable musings by extracting from old le Blanc further intelligence about his own or his daughter's affairs.

“ And what says Jacques le Vasseur all this time, Pierre, do you know ?” said I ; “ is he proof against appearances, and stanch as true knight should be, in belief of Fanchette’s innocence ?”

“ Victor could not tell me ; for since the sad event, Jacques has been missing from Aubonne. Some say he is gone off to France to enlist as a soldier, but no one knows. Old Baptiste takes it very coolly ; so as Jacques left him his strong box, he cares little about the rest of his family—*et puis*,” (with a sigh) “ they are all sons, he has no daughter !”

“ And le Blanc,” said I, avoiding the one too painful subject, “ how go on your own affairs ? Has that rascal *Maitre Gros* (for I conclude it was he who took you in, you were always too fond of the fellow) refunded any part of your hard-won savings ?”

“ *Mai foi, non*,” answered Pierre, “ *il a la griffe trop forte, Maitre Gros !* But I was told within this week, by a *cocher* from Toulouse, that he is caught at Marseilles, and sent to the galleys for cheating a French colonel, if that is any satisfaction to me.”

“ Has he not left property at Lausanne ?” “ *Ouidà !*

a capital house—*belle écurie, grénier, tout ce qu'il faut pour chevaux*, all set up and furnished with my poor *écus* ; but *la justice* has got hold of every thing, and as I cannot afford to pay her my share, for aught I can see, she will keep it all to herself. If I had any one to see me righted—”

“ *I'll* see you righted, Pierre, and Fanchette too, if there is law or justice in the Pays de Vaud—but adieu for the present—yonder comes breakfast, and the chimnies of Covigliaio.”

We proceeded on our journey with all the rapidity our mutual interest in its termination could induce ; but having entered Italy by the Simplon, I was providentially inspired to prefer for my *exit* the route of Mont Cenis, one little longer, though leading somewhat less directly to Lausanne. Whether this preference arose from its being more—to borrow Pierre's favourite expression—“ *du côté de Lyon*,” I leave to the motive-hunters above alluded to, to decide. So it was, and after surmounting the difficulties of this glorious mountain passage, and leaving behind us the singularly dull and uninteresting capital of Savoy—we stopped for the night at the little *auberge* of Rumilly.

“ *Vous voyagez tout seul, Monsieur*,” said the

hostess to me, in a hesitating tone, as I lounged about while supper was preparing, at the door of the inn, “*allez vous par hazard du côté de Lausanne ?*” On my answering in the affirmative, she looked steadfastly in my face, as if to ascertain whether it was one honest enough to be trusted with a pretty girl ; and then said, “*nous avons ici une pauvre fille malade, qui n'aura jamais la force de faire à pied ce maudit chemin jusqu'à Lausanne, ou elle meurt d'envie d'arriver. Monsieur aurait-il le bon cocur de lui faire un petit coin de place dans sa voiture ? Elle est maigre à faire peur, et ne mange rien—ça 'ne contera pas cher—d'ailleurs je crois qu'elle a de quoi payer, elle ou son frère, qui se desole de la voir ainsi.*”

A girl from Lausanne ! my heart leaped to my lips. Could it be Fanchette ? but no, there was a brother in the case, and what could she be doing on the road to Mont Cenis ? However, sure I was that Pierre's kind heart would second me in any good office to a towns-woman in distress ; and I went to the stable to prepare him for the *rencontre*. “*Pierre,*” said I, “*there is some one from Lausanne in the house là bas—who knows but we may hear tidings of Fanchette ?*” He threw down his

curry-comb, and would have rushed past me to the inn, but I stopped him. “*Doucement, Pierre,*” said I, “*c’est une jeune femme, et puis, elle est malade.*”

Sick or well, young or old, Pierre would have been at her bed-side in a minute, and the poor old man himself perhaps stretched beside her with the sudden surprise—had he not, in making for the door, fairly tumbled over Jacques le Vasseur, who was mounting guard over it, seated on the staircase, the picture of despair. I caught the old man from behind, and saved him from falling, while Jacques grasped both his hands, and unconsciously ejaculated his name. A scream from within told us he was overheard—a heavy noise as of something falling succeeded. Pierre knocked me backward, and the young man forward, and in an instant had his fainting daughter locked in his arms. She had dressed herself, we found, on hearing there was a carriage arrived below, in hopes of being able to write or send a message to her father ; but overcome by the exertion, had been forced to lie down again. The hostess soon succeeded in restoring her, and removing her to another apartment, where, quietly seated, with one hand in her

father's, and another in faithful Jacques le Vasseur's, she was able to tell us what had befallen her since her misfortune.

Thus I had at once designated it, from the moment I looked in her innocent face, and saw her meeting with her father. It was that of no penitent, depending on paternal tenderness for pardon and commiseration—but the frank, confiding, joyous transport of one, who felt that she was still worthy to throw herself into an honest man's arms. “*Fanchette, ma pauvre Fanchette !*” repeated the old man, as he gazed on the wan and wasted cheek I had thought so rich and rosy, when it first peeped from beneath the little *Vaudoise* cap—“*tu as bien souffert, mon enfant ! conte nous ce qui t'est arrivé.*”

Fanchette's first impulse on leaving Lyons, had been to proceed direct to Lausanne, to weep on the sympathizing bosom of her father, and implore his aid in investigating the sad circumstances of her apparent guilt. On entering, under cloud of night, her native place, she had crept like a condemned criminal, along the well known streets ; but on arriving, breathless and exhausted, at her father's door, what had been her horror to find her home

deserted, and the house branded with ignominy ! Her old nurse, who alone could have thrown light on the business, and who would, at least, have blessed and wept over her, was still, she learned from a neighbour's child, too ill in mind and body to be capable of answering questions ; so, fearful of encountering the gaze of less partial observers, and trembling with vague and undefined terrors of arrest and imprisonment, the poor girl crept out of the town, taking instinctively the road to Aubonne.

The moon soon rose brightly, and favoured her progress towards her lover's dwelling, which she reached ere dawn ; and aware that morning light would see the active Jacques at his usual employment of dressing the vines, she hid herself in the vineyard till he came. At sight of her, he threw down bill and pruning-hook, and well nigh fainted ; but it was with no emotions save grief and surprise—for he had heard with scornful incredulity the vague tale of her detected guilt. One look in her pale face satisfied him he was right, and a second determined him to follow and protect her wherever she might direct her course. To offer her an asylum under his hard father's roof, was beyond his power ; but he had an aunt on whose

loating affection he could rely, at Chambery, and thither he proposed conducting Fanchette, secretly trusting to receive, under the sanction of this partial relative, a title to assume more publicly the character of the champion of injured innocence. To make Fanchette his wife, was now his unalterable resolution ; and as his father's consent was under existing circumstances hopeless, his being consulted seemed better dispensed with altogether. But Fanchette, though she accepted in pure despair, the offer of his aunt's temporary protection, turned a deaf ear to all Jacques' insinuations of his hopes from her influence. “ *Si jamais je suis tu femme a sera devant Dieu, et mon père, et le tien ; et ce ne sera que lorsque je pourrai aller tête levée à l'Eglise, a travers toutes les rues de Lausanne. Ce bon tems viendra, si Dieu le permet ; sinon, je t'aimerai toujours, Jacques, mais je ne serai à toi que dans la tombe.*”

This sad last alternative seemed of the two the most likely to be realized ; for poor Fanchette, worn out with fatigue and conflicting emotions, fell ill, as already related, at the post-house of Rumilly—about half-way between Geneva and Chambery, and conceiving herself dying, felt a most natural

longing to close her young existence under the roof where she had drawn her first breath. "Your aunt is a good woman, and a kind one, Jacques," she would disconsolately exclaim; "but she could never sing me to sleep like poor old Marthe, or smile on me through her tears like my dear father! Pray for me, Jacques, that I may have strength vouchsafed me to reach home, and die in thine arms!"

It was only, alas! with prayers and wishes that Jacques could soothe her distress; for the pittance she had providentially accepted from her wages, and Jacques' own slender pocket-money, were soon alike exhausted. To interest the feelings of the hostess in procuring her a gratuitous conveyance to Lausanne, was his last resource, and the result of it has already been related.

Fanchette's was in truth a sad narrative, broken with many tears from more than one eye; while, at the recital of the base suspicions to which his beloved had been subjected, Jacques le Vasseur's actually flashed fire. The father groaned, and twisted convulsively the buttons of his *capote*, as he heard from her own lips the tale of his child's degradation, and expulsion from the roof whose

protection he had thought so desirable. *I* too could not help shrinking abashed from the painful result of my proffered patronage. I felt that Caroline Irwin had been urged on by harsher natures than her own, and by (it must be owned,) irresistible appearances, to do injustice to the gentle being before me; but how these appearances could have originated, became the chief point of intense interest.

“Have you no clue to this mystery, Fanchette?” said I; “do you suspect no one of secreting the jewels in your chamber to screen themselves, or implicate you?”

“God only knows, Monsieur Selwyn,” said Fanchette, (as if now for the first time fully conscious of my presence,) “how they got there. My room has been locked up ever since I first went to live with Madame Irwin, and the key in my pocket—till, now I remember, the day before we all left Lausanne, old Marthe asked me for it, to put by out of the way the box Monsieur left at our house.”

“The box!” exclaimed I, starting up off my chair, as one on whom light suddenly dawned,—“the box! fool! dolt! that I have been not to think of it sooner—Fanchette, do you know what that box contained?”

“ *Oh ! que non, Monsieur,*” was her simple answer ; it was none of mine you know, and why should I think of looking into it ? I only remember it was very heavy.”

“ Fanchette,” said I, “ that box, heavy as it is, has lightened my heart of the weightest burden that ever oppressed it. Your’s too may beat freely once more I suspect, in your simple bosom. I have been myself the chief culprit in this sad business, but I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of cutting, in presence of all parties, the Gordian knot I unconsciously helped to tie, and which I trust may yet be the parent of others more auspicious. *Tenez vous tranquille, Fanchette,*” added I, “ as your father used to say to me when his mules took a fit of kicking. Get into the *calèche* with Pierre and Jacques—go leisurely home to Lausanne, so as to give me time to travel *en poste* to Lyons. Keep out of sight, and away from your own house till I give you notice, and then we’ll all meet, you shall know where, and wherefore. All’s well that ends well, Fanchette—and that I trust will be our case.”

Pierre and Jacques looked a moment at me with scrutinizing glances, as if somewhat doubtful of my sanity—but the gentle good Fanchette, stretching

out her hand in amity—said, with a faint smile, “ *Ne me fais pas languir, Monsieur ! je voudrais mourir justifié.*”

“ *Ou vivre mariée, ce qui vaut mieux—n’est-ce pas, Fanchette ?*” said I cheerfully, shaking hands with the group, and repeating my instructions for them to proceed slowly, as Fanchette’s weak condition required, to Lausanne. I indemnified the good hostess for her kindness to the maiden, replenished the leathern purse of Pierre with store of *gros écus* for the journey, and then threw myself, late as it was, into a *cabriolet* for Lyons.

I got there early in the following day, and alighting at a hotel, scrawled a hasty note to Mrs. Irwin, asking permission to wait on her immediately. Had I been bound on any less romantic and chivalrous errand, I should have looked forward with anxiety to this interview—one fraught with inevitable pain to both, and to myself, with yet unavowed hopes and fears. But my head and heart were full of Fanchette, and her dim eye and faded bloom eclipsed from me even the interesting figure of another lovely mourner.

I was admitted of course, and following the messenger with breathless haste, ushered myself

into my fair friend's *boudoir*, in a state of emotion, which I have since fancied must have seemed to her in the highest degree alarming and absurd. "Mrs. Irwin," said I—nay, under the influence of strong excitement, I believe I actually called her Caroline—"We have both something to answer for and atone. We took a simple Swiss maiden from her father's fostering care, where she dwelt in peace and innocence, to return her thither blighted by the breath of calumny. Circumstances in which I have borne a singular share, favoured the delusion, but the means of reparation and vindication are in our power; need I ask if you are disposed cheerfully to adopt them? I could easily I believe justify, with a word, poor Fanchette to your private ear and heart; but I think we owe to her and to ourselves, to make her justification as public as the accusation it refutes. Will you go at my request, and on my responsibility, on this benevolent mission to Lausanne?"

"If you hold out any hopes of clearing poor Fanchette's character by the journey," answered Mrs. Irwin, "I would willingly perform twice the distance. My mind has misgiven me, and my heart reproached me ever since I let her go un-

friended from my door, and balanced the destiny of even an erring human being, against a set of paltry glittering baubles. I hope she has not suffered materially from my harshness?"

"Much and bitterly, Mrs. Irwin," said I; "she has paid with reputation and nearly with life, for forgetfulness of your's and mine. Let us join in the *amende honorable*, which is yet I trust in time to restore both. I'll tell you all her sad history in the carriage; when shall I order it to the door?"

"Instantly," said the amiable woman; and I could not help drawing, from her readiness to accompany me for the happiness of others, some augury in favour of her one day listening to me in behalf of my own. However, it was but a transient secondary thought. Nothing is such an antidote to selfishness, as a brace or two of fellow-creatures actually dependent on one's exertions.

"You need not express any remaining fears, my dear Mrs. Irwin," said I, as I finished in the carriage the story of Fanchette's disasters, "on the score of the poor maiden's acquittal. If any one is convicted of the theft of the jewels, it will undoubtedly be he who now sits beside you. You would not feel quite so much at your ease, if you were aware

it was in *my* custody, your trinkets must have been found."

"You speak in enigmas, Mr. Selwyn," answered she, looking up in my face with the same dubious expression I had observed on the countenances of Pierre and Jacques at Rumilly; but, like Fanchette, she took it for granted I was in my senses. There is an instinct in woman which makes her see with a glance if there is method in the madness she witnesses or inspires.

On reaching Lausanne, we stopped as I had arranged, at the *Lion D'Or*, in the court of which I observed Jacques on the look-out. He told me Pierre and his daughter were living *perdue*, at a farm near Aubonne, and only awaited my orders to be forthcoming. I left Mrs. Irwin to rest after our rapid journey, and recover from the emotions natural on revisiting Lausanne, and, detaining Jacques, waited on the *Juge de Paix*, with whom I was slightly acquainted, requesting to know at what hour on the morrow Pierre le Blanc's house might be judicially opened, for the satisfaction of Mrs. Irwin, who had come from Lyons for the purpose—in presence of competent witnesses.

It did my heart good to see the worthy *Juge's*

blank look at the proposal. He eyed me with evident ill-will and repugnance, and, had I wanted any testimony to the high character and estimation of honest Pierre, I should have found it in the reluctance of a public functionary to favour any proceedings against him. The *Juge* started difficulties and threw obstacles—hinted that in the case of a young and inexperienced girl of reputable parentage, the recovery of the property might perhaps be deemed sufficient reparation—spoke of the delicacy of the Swiss in matters affecting character, of the great respectability of Pierre, and the once unblemished fame of Fanchette ; in short, belied his vocation so delightfully, that if I had not stopped him with affected impatience, I must infallibly have hugged him for his goodness of heart.

Seeing me apparently inflexible, he appointed twelve next day, for the inspection of the apartment, and for comparing with its undisturbed contents, the *procès verbal*, formerly drawn up by his myrmidons—whom I verily believe he employed in the interval, in secret endeavours to warn and keep out of the way my imagined victims. At least Jacques, when I desired him, on leaving the *Hotel de Ville*, to bring Pierre and Fanchette to

town with him, without fail on the morrow—smiled significantly, and said he had already received advice of a contrary description. But he added, “*Monsieur* can mean us only good, while it is not for nothing that police officers or cats show *patte de velours*.”

To cut a long tale short—twelve o'clock next day saw assembled at Pierre Le Blanc's door, as *dramatis personæ*—the *juge de paix* and his assessors, the four policemen by whom the first search had been made, the owner of the stolen property, the father and lover of the accused, myself, the contriver of this scenical denouement—and for spectators, half the town of Lausanne. Among the rest, as one summoned from the grave by supernatural energy—old Marthe, who for the first time comprehending of what her dear nursling was preposterously accused, had nearly paid for the shock it inflicted, with her life.

The seals were removed with judicial formality from the house-door, and those of some outer apartments. As the crowd pressed round that of the supposed culprit, exclamations of regret and compassion circulated among them, mingled with remarks of a different character, called forth by the

unmoved composure, mistaken for insensibility, of Pierre, and Jacques le Vasseur. "Old le Blanc takes it mighty coolly," said one; "and yet he looks ill and old," whispered another. "Jacques le Vasseur might have staid away," cried a third. "Shame on him," exclaimed a fourth. "And look, see how eagerly that hard-hearted Englishman watches the opening of the door! What good can the exile or imprisonment of poor little Fanchon do him?" "And who would think that lady so blood-thirsty?" said a good-natured butcher. "To look at her she seems as mild as a new-born babe," ejaculated a benevolent matron. "And all for paltry gew-gaws!" cried a sanctified old maid. In short, the commentary might have afforded much amusement to one less absorbed than myself in the *coup de théâtre* which was to silence it, or at least turn it into a new and unexpected channel.

The door flew open—and in rushed as many as the room, a pretty spacious one, would admit. The plain and scanty furniture was not of a nature to excite attention, had it not been coupled with a tale of early crime and misfortune. On that lowly pallet, innocence had long and blissfully reposed; was it ever again to be similarly tenanted? The

chief magnet of curiosity, however, to privileged as well as unlicensed observers, was a deal box, occupying the centre of the apartment; whose miscellaneous contents, strewed about in disorder, bore evidence to the small tenderness with which they had been examined by the satellites of justice. They consisted chiefly of a few simple Alpine curiosities, such as fossils and spars, likely enough to have been picked up in his wanderings, and brought to his daughter by a Swiss voiturier. But on removing the bulkier of these, and unfolding an oil-skin cloak in which it had been once more carelessly wrapped, there was discovered a beautifully inlaid rosewood writing-desk!

Mrs. Irwin gave a start, a half-shriek, a look at me, and almost fainted. I flew to support her, and by a strong effort, she gazed again on the desk. It was her late husband's—presented by her to me, as a memorial of our friendship, and left by me at the trusty le Blanc's (concealed, however, from notice within the deal-box before mentioned,) to await my return from Italy—the very limited accommodation of the courier's *cabriolet*, and its own intrinsic and acquired value, combining to forbid my making it the companion of a rapid and

perilous journey. Pierre and his daughter being both absent the day I left Lausanne, I had consigned it to old Marthe—who naturally enough, sought for it a safe asylum in the unoccupied chamber of her nursling.

This desk, though I had never, after it became mine, either leisure or nerve to examine it—had, I knew, been enriched by the mechanical genius of its late owner, with many devices for concealment, more ingenious than useful. These, after forcing unceremoniously the delicate lock, the lynx eyes of the policemen had succeeded in exploring; and in one of them, said the now for the first time produced *procès verbal*, had been found Mrs. Irwin's missing jewels. And by whom deposited? There could be but one solution. By the deceased owner of the desk, on seeing them abandoned on the table at the mercy of the servants, by his too heedless wife, to whom his immediately ensuing illness and death prevented his ever making the communication.

Never had melo-dramatist more unmingled success than myself. Mrs. Irwin wept, the *juge de paix* smiled, Pierre raised his eyes to heaven, Jacques le Vasseur clasped his hands in ecstacy, and all the spectators, like men recovering from in-

tolerable excitement, breathed simultaneously and freely.

I briefly explained such of the circumstances as instinct had not already developed. "Gentlemen," said I, "that box and all its contents are mine. *I* alone am answerable for aught found within a desk, the key of which has never quitted my watch-chain, since delivered to me by the relict of a lamented friend. *She* knows by what revered hand the jewels must have been there deposited; *we* by what rude and sacrilegious ones they were forcibly removed. It only remains that the poor young woman, so innocently a sufferer for others' negligence, should publicly receive their recantation and apology. Who knows where Fanchette le Blanc is to be found?"

"*La voici, la voici!*" cried a voice, tremulous with age and emotion, and way was instinctively made through the crowd for old Marthe, supporting, feeble as she herself was, her yet more tottering foster-child. "*La voici, bonne comme elle est belle, et c'est assez dire.*" Le Vasseur and her father relieved the old woman of her lovely burthen, and led her forward amid the acclamations of her townsmen, while the good *juge* kindly addressed her in terms of the most flattering encouragement.

“*Tu es une brave fille, Fanchette,*” said he, “*et tu mérites qu'on fasse quelque chose pour toi. Dites toujours, que souhaites tu de ta part de ta patrie, qui t'a méconnue ?*” “*La justice tout simplement, Monsieur,*” said I, acting as spokesman to the blushing girl. “Fanchette bids me say that her father, as principal, if not sole creditor, has an undoubted right to the property in houses, stables, &c. left by Maitre Gros of swindling notoriety ; and all the boon she craves is, that he may be put in possession with as little of delay as the forms of law permit. As for expenses, I am Fanchette's debtor for those. Mrs. Irwin acknowledges to have for the said Fanchette's use on the day of her marriage, five hundred crowns of fairly earned salary. I hold myself bound, in name of house-rent for my unlucky box, to fill said box to overflowing, with paraphernalia more appropriate than it now contains, and it remains with Jacques le Vasseur to say, whether he will come to inhabit as my tenant, the house Pierre le Blanc vacates by removing to Maitre Gros' more spacious premises, or whether he will carry his bride to be the pride of Aubonne, as she has been hitherto of Lausanne.”

Jacques looked at Fanchette—her eyes were fixed

upon her weeping white-headed parent ; he followed their silent direction, and said in a soft but audible whisper, “ *Nous restons à Lausanne, n'est-ce pas, Fanchette ?* ”

Mrs. Irwin, after the marriage, returned to Lyons. Duties too sacred to be neglected carried me to England, and detained me there for nearly two years. But we have since been *together* at Lausanne, and those who met *by chance*, can now be severed by death alone.

THE DESERTER
OF
CASTEL GANDOLFO.

THE DESERTER

OF

CASTEL GANDOLFO.

I QUESTION whether the boldest traveller between Rome and Naples does not shrink either with undisguised alarm, or at least a vague feeling of indefinable danger, from the mixture of squalor and ferocity exhibited by the groupes which haunt, like spectre banditti, the narrow streets and nameless abysses of the towns of Itri and Fondi.

I have travelled far, and seen savage life in all its unadorned nakedness ; and though no Vaillant or Rousseau, to extol, at the expense of civilization,

the brutal recklessness of the tawny African or copper Indian—commend me to either, in a dark lane, in preference to the demi-brigand of Italy ; who, pursuing his wild vocation under the cloak of a legitimate calling, were it only that of a beggar or cattle-herd, looks out upon you from under his slouched hat and shaggy sheepskin, as if it could only be by a rare exertion on his part of forbearance, that you are spared a journey to the mountains, or perhaps to the next world.

But it is not to idlers and Englishmen alone, that their glance is withering, and their cupidity fatal. The mountain of Terracina has echoed the dying groans of unransomed poverty and butchered innocence ; and peasants and Italians like themselves have fallen victims to wanton barbarity and baffled avarice.

An adventure occurred during the sojourn of the French in the country, in which romance and reality, poetical and political justice, were so strikingly blended, that perhaps it may interest others as much as it did myself and the village of Castel Gandolfo.

That an inhabitant of so enchanting a spot should ever have enlisted as a soldier, seemed to

me like abjuring paradise for Pandemonium ; that having done so, he should desert to return—the simplest thing in nature. The village itself, perched, like most in the Campagna, on the summit of an abrupt rocky knoll of considerable elevation, looks down on the boundless plains beneath, over a verdant ocean of perennial foliage. Ilexes, venerable enough to have been contemporary with Domitian, spread their “ boundless contiguity of shade” over the summer retreat of the popes, on the ruins of the villa of the Roman tyrant ; while long green alleys stretch their interminable vistas down towards the little glassy lake of Nemi, deep cradled in classic groves, and meetly styled by the ancients, from its mingled purity and seclusion, the mirror of Diana. The one day I passed at Castel Gandolfo haunts me, spite of the lapse of years, with its blissful memories ; and had I been born there, no bribe, methinks, could ever have lured me away.

But those whom worlds would not bribe from homes less paradisiacal than Castel Gandolfo, may be spirited thence by infidelity or injustice. My hero, for such, notwithstanding the bad moral, I fear, I must confess the deserter Gactano Mori to

be—was the blithest lad in the whole *paese*, until a devil of a jealous rival, who wanted him away, and a clear field for the favour of Lucia Anelli, made him believe, not only that the parents of his sweetheart repented of their tacit consent to the union—a likely case enough, as the bridegroom's whole wealth consisted in his ten fingers, a woodman's axe, half a dozen goats, and an old-fashioned Spanish rifle—but that Lucia herself began to think the possessions above enumerated but scanty provision for Hymen, and to smile in Gaetano's absence, on a thriving young farmer, of the neighbouring village of Rocca di Papa.

There is on earth no being so credulous, where love and jealousy are concerned, as an Italian ; and if, from natural softness of heart, (for principle I fear must not be spoken of on the subject) he forbear to revenge his supposed wrongs on others, he is sure to do it on himself. An Englishman would have walked straight up, with a face like a mastiff's, and asked his mistress point blank if her intention was to cut him ; a Frenchman would have cut her, on the mere suspicion ; a Spaniard would have spited her by throwing away his life at the next bull-fight ; but Gaetano chose a surer

way to do both, by enlisting in the French army, then newly installed in possession of the eternal city.

Now Gaetano was by no means fond by nature either of Frenchmen or fighting. He loved his native village—how dearly, he never guessed till he turned his back upon it; and Lucia, how madly, he never suspected till too late; and no sooner had his mountain spirit endured the ignominy of half a-dozen “*sacres*,” from a *vieille moustache* of a drill-serjeant, and his love and hopes the astounding shock of being ordered (a thing “never dreamt of in his philosophy,”) to follow an Italian corps across the Alps, than he resolved magnanimously to desert the first opportunity.

This resolution was marvellously strengthened by a billet which Lucia, not choosing to trust the village scribe with her secrets, contrived to get written, by whom think you? but by the youthful farmer of Rocca di Papa, the rival, but thoroughly generous and disinterested one, of her long betrothed Gaetano. She told him in plain terms, that were any thing to befall her lover, or were he ever to cross the, to her, insurmountable barrier of the Appennines, (the Alps she had never thought of,)

she would either die, or go into a nunnery, which was in his eyes pretty much the same thing. So Giovanni relented, and like a true knight of old, did his lady's bidding, come of his own love what might.

The letter advised (and the advice was, in the true spirit of heroism, dictated by Giovanni himself,) strict and patient concealment in some of the villages nearest the Neapolitan frontier, till pursuit should subside, and the corps he had deserted be fairly on its march to France, then—wrote Lucia's really friendly amanuensis—he might freely return to Castel Gandolfo, and claim his bride as the reward of his obedience.

The billet reached our recruit after a hot fatiguing drill, dispirited by his own awkwardness, maddened with camp jests on it, in short, just in a mood to obey all except the sensible part of its injunctions. He waited impatiently for twilight, as, in his soldier's garb, escape by day was impossible ; and no sooner had the Ave Maria sounded, and the watch been relieved on the ramparts of St. Angelo, than he glided unperceived from his file amid the retiring guard, and threading precipitately each narrow *vicolo* between the Ponte Sisto, and the

Lateran, gained the gate of St. John, and left the Eternal city behind him.

The Campagna, as all who have actually seen it know, is not, when viewed in detail, the unvarying plain it is generally represented. On the contrary, its surface is broken and diversified with endless knolls and mounds ; some natural, but more the shapeless relics of those endless suburban structures, dignified, no one knows why, with the venerable name of *Roma Antica*. Behind and between these, a greater body than a single deserter, might find abundant lurking places ; and Gaetano, not probably missed from his quarters till morning, cleared the flat country unmolested and unpursued. But pursuit was equally certain and formidable ; for *I Francesi*, whatever their other faults were, had certainly not that of “ letting grass grow at their heels,” as deserters and brigands had already begun to experience. So our fugitive struck as soon as possible off the modern road to Naples, and clambered up among the rock-perched villages, marking the ancient Etruscan way.

In these he found all the sympathy which common hatred of foreign discipline could awaken ; and three long days of security having elapsed,

Gaetano, like the hare which, because snug in its form, it sees nothing, imagines nobody can see it, concluded himself forgotten, and marched boldly forth on his way southward. To venture upon Castel Gandolfo at present, had, to do him justice, found no part of his original plan ; but the cross road he was pursuing would bring him so temptingly within reach of it, that risk it he must, for a glimpse of Lucia Anelli. His townsmen he was sure would not betray him, and it was the last place where French spies would think of looking for him ; so onward he strode, gaily, whistling a *Saltarella*, and half mad enough to dream of dancing one at night with Lucia.

The distant clatter of hoofs, an unusual sound on the rugged and sequestered road he was travelling, roused him to a sense of danger, acute in proportion to his former security ; and instinctively apprehending pursuers in the unknown horsemen, he hailed with transport the sight of a market-cart half-filled with straw, and driven by his ancient acquaintance and rival, farmer Giovanni M——. There was no time for parley, the case spoke for itself ; nor did Gaetano, though ignorant of Giovanni's disinterested conduct as Lucia's amanuensis,

for a moment suspect him of betraying even a rival, to French gendarmes. In the twinkling of an eye, he was deep embedded in the long maize straw, and Giovanni stretched above him, as if half asleep, with real Italian quickness, and well dissembled apathy.

No clown of Italian comedy, ever received with more genuine stolidity of aspect the inquiries of *Messieurs les Gendarmes* after their refractory conscript, than Giovanni; and what answer he chose to give, he enveloped so mysteriously in the *gergo* or *patois* of the mountains, that better linguists than those of the *great nation* might have been at fault. There was nothing (so the Gendarmes opined) to be made of this sleepy-headed, unidead, tongue-tied, peasant; so wheeling their horses with an air of derision, they regained the high road, leaving the two rivals jogging prosperously towards the domicile of Giovanni, a few miles off, at Rocca di Papa.

But this abode of peace and industry poor Giovanni was never destined to reach. Ere Gaetano, (whom his kind rival took care by his weight to keep in order while danger of surprise from the soldiery remained) could lift up his head to pour out his

thanks to one whom he began to think quite as worthy of Lucia as himself, it was forcibly pushed down again, as a fresh cause of alarm presented itself in the appearance of a considerable party of brigands, whom the vicinity of the gendarmes had kept skulking half the day, till their departure left the field open to a deed of meditated villany.

It is not often that Italians and equals have to dread the predatory outrages of native robbers. But Giovanni, alas ! was rich, and as such, an enemy to brigands ; and he was known that very day to have sold produce at a fair, to an amount which made his plunder an object too tempting to be resisted by those, whose foreign sources of rapine the French had pretty well dried up. Poor Giovanni, on the appearance of the party, had no fears but for his comrade's detection, and prevented him so effectually from peeping out to see what was the matter, that the dagger of the leader (as he leant in familiar converse against the side of the waggon,) was buried in his own unsuspecting heart, ere one movement could be made by Gaetano for his rescue. A deep groan from his generous protector, and the muttered imprecations of the banditti, saved him the risk of fruitless exposure to ascertain

the catastrophe; nor could he now, single-handed, against a dozen armed men, earn, even at any risk, the present pleasure of avenging him. He lay stiller therefore than ever, half afraid to breathe, lest by scaring the robbers, he should miss the opportunity of consigning to justice, either now or hereafter, the murderers of the kind-hearted Giovanni.

The body, after being rudely pulled out of the cart and rifled, was as rudely cast in again; and to Gaetano's secret joy, the plan agreed on by the robbers, was to drive the waggon forward towards its destination, consigning it to the first peasant they should meet, with a cock-and-bull story of their having found its owner, already murdered on the road.

Before starting, they buried, in case of accidents, the booty in a spot which Gaetano durst not raise himself sufficiently to ascertain. But luckily the captain, fond of dress, as brigands usually are, took a fancy to a gay Paris handkerchief which had ornamented the poor farmer's vest for the fair; and snatching it rudely and yet blood-stained from his neck, thrust it into his own bosom till a fitter opportunity for display. This manoeuvre, Gaetano

distinctly saw, and a providential peep it was, for the purposes of justice.

The band now separated, but before their dispersion, drew lots who was to officiate as driver of the abandoned waggon. The lot fell on the assassin, (a vine-dresser of La Riccia) who, looking as if he did not half like the job, sullenly exchanged his gay captain's habit (carefully retaining the *handkerchief*, however) for one of the coarse peasant frocks which so often and conveniently transform a nest of banditti into a set of peaceful ordinary-looking peasantry.

The waggon at length set forward, and had not proceeded far, when, to the almost equal horror of the robber and Gaetano, their ears were saluted with a wanton incautious shot from one of the dispersing band, meant probably as a signal to his concealed wife, or expecting brood of robber imps, but which the recent vicinity of the gendarmes rendered little short of madness.

Their mutual forebodings, all uncommunicated as they were, the event soon realized. The gendarmes had lingered in the neighbourhood, with the view of foraging for refreshments, at a cottage, within hearing of the report. Powder, as French sol-

diers nationally reasoned, was not burnt for nothing; so up they leaped in their saddles, and throwing the old crone who had fed them (as savages propitiate demons through fear) more *bajocchi* than she had ever seen in her life, galloped back in the direction of the shot.

“*Sacre !*” exclaimed the one who came up first, in a tone of more subdued horror than had often issued from his lips, “what have we here? The rustic was stupid enough, heaven knows, and obstinate besides; but that’s no reason why he should be murdered in broad day, and with a *French* police in the country too. How came this about; ’tother clodpole, hey? and tell us what hand *you* had in it.”

“Io !!!” ejaculated the really trembling robber, throwing up his eyes as if he had never handled stiletto in his life, “*Madre di Dio !*” (kissing an image of the Virgin, which had got entangled among the very folds of the bloody handkerchief) “*I murder any one ! a countryman especially, and a buon’ anima come quella.*”

“I don’t think his goodness would have much share in hindering you,” muttered the gendarme, “nor your’s either. There’s mischief in your eye,

in spite of your saints and images: give a better account of yourself and this business, else, *Ventre-bleu*, you must to the *corps de garde*."

The wily assassin, now more on his guard, was just beginning a tissue of elaborate falsehoods, when Gactano, unable even at the risk of his life to forego avenging his preserver by denouncing his murderer, started bolt upright among the straw, to the equal astonishment of all parties; and totally regardless of his own jeopardy, detailed in animated language, his obligations to the deceased, and his instantaneous and cowardly murder by the assassin now before them. The stamp of truth was too legible on all he said to be doubted. Men do not peril their lives on gratuitous falsehoods, and no deserter was as yet known to have escaped, under the inflexible French *régime*.

The murderer would have yet denied and equivocated, but the handkerchief, the bloody trophy on which reposed the profaned image of his heavenly patroness—spoke volumes against him. So, his hands safely tied behind him with that very handkerchief, and bound down with the gladly lent sashes of the two gendarmes, it was ere long his turn to take in the cart the place of the tem-

porarily released Gaetano ; who, mounted behind one of the friendly troopers, felt, in the consciousness of honest feelings and disinterested conduct, a lightness of spirit which his associates did their best to sustain.

“ *Courage ! mon ami !*” said one, “ *si tu es fusillé, ce n’est pas grand chose !*” “ Bah,” cried the other, “ *ou fusillera plutôt ce coquin de brigand, ce sera tout de même.*”

But shot somehow Gaetano felt he should not be, for Lucia he was sure would die, and nobody could have a hand in any thing so dreadful. Luckily for him, the commanding officer at La Riccia was young and romantic ; the gendarmes magnified the few bold words of their prisoner into a *bona fide* capture of the noted leader of banditti. Lucia was sent for opportunely, to plead with the loveliest black eyes that ever swam glittering in tears,—the corps had fortunately marched without its recruit on distant service—so, thanks to a kind Providence—Gaetano was not shot, but married ; and instead of a sad and sorry soldier, was allowed to become a glad and grateful bridegroom.

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